Saijaku Muhai no Bahamut Volume 1

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GA文庫

UNDEFEATED BAHAMUT CHRONICLE

最弱無敗の神装機竜（バハムート）

バハムートクロニクル

明月千里
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最弱無敗の神装機竜（バハムート）

五年前、革命によって滅ぼされた帝国の王子・ルクスは、誤って乱入してしまった女子寮の浴場で、新王国の姫・リーズシャルテと出会う。

「……いつまでわたしの裸を見ている気だ、この痴れ者がぁぁっ！」

遺跡から発掘された、古代兵器・装甲機竜（ドラグナイト）。かつて、最強の機竜使いと呼ばれたルクスは、一切の攻撃をしない機竜使いとして『無敗の最弱』と、今は呼ばれていた。リーズシャルテに挑まれた決闘の末、ルクスは何故か、機竜使い育成のための女学園に入学することに……!?

王立士官学園（アカデミー）の貴族子女たちに囲まれた、没落王子（ルクス）の物語が始まる。

王道と覇道が交錯する、〝最強〟の学園ファンタジーバトル、開幕！

最弱無敗の神装機竜

バハムート

アイリ・アーカディア

旧帝国の皇族の生き残り。
一年生で、ルクスの実の妹。

クルルシファー・エインフォルク

北の大国、ユミル教国からの
留学生であるクラスメイト。

ルクス・アーカディア

滅亡した帝国の王子。
『無敗の最弱』と呼ばれる機竜使い。

リーズシャルテ・アティスマータ

アティスマータ新王国第一王女。
通称、朱の戦姫（あかせんき）。

ノクト・リーフレット

アイリのルームメイトの少女。
『三和音（トライアド）』の一人。

フィルフィ・アイングラム

アイングラム財閥の次女。
ルクスの幼馴染みで学園長の妹。

CONTENTS

P003 Prologue　黒き英雄

P008 Episode1　真夜中の侵入者

P037 Episode2　貴族子女たちの学園

P059 Episode3　朱の戦姫（あか　せんき）

P082 Episode4　強襲、そして

P112 Episode5　幼馴染みとの再会

P152 Episode6　機竜の工房（アトリエ）と入団試験

P223 Episode7　最弱の機竜使い（ドラグナイト）

P283 Epilogue　王子の居場所

UNDEFEATED BAHAMUT CHRONICLE

GA文庫

最弱無敗の神装機竜（バハムート）

明月千里

Prologue: The Black Hero

The girl looked up to the sky.

As if she was being absorbed by the deep dark sky, the girl was looking up as if she was enchanted by it.

However, the lower region of the sky was red.

The red flames that were slowly wavering within the whole surface.

The powerful country that controlled one fifth of the world. The castle of the Acadia Empire was burning.

A castle made from thick rock built up high, as if to cut itself off from the outside world.

Being surrounded by it where the sparks fell down to courtyard, the girl simply looked up the sky.

There were Dragons dancing in the sky.

The battle of the Drag-Knights with their lives on the line where they wore a dark grey ancient weapon over their body.

Hundreds of Dragons danced in the sky that was lit by the flames as they made their howls, had their wings torn off, and fell.

"Aren't you going to run away, brat?"

The girl turned around; hearing a voice from behind her.

There was a youth standing there.

A handsome face with silver hair and ash coloured eyes.

That man who wore a cape with a refined design imprinted on it acted in a manly manner like that of a noble, but he looked at the girl with his sparkling eyes that made you think of a hungry beast.

However, the girl clad in a black dress who had no emotion in her eyes didn't get scared and instead gazed at the youth with her eyes.

"……Were you the one that killed them? The people of this castle—"

"I did. …….If I say that, will you avenge them? Fine then, bring it."

Instead of trembling at the question thrown at him, he drew his sword out with joy.

It was a beautiful blade that had multiple silver lines on its surface.

A divine weapon that was the key to activate the Drag-Ride and control them—the sword device.

"……If you did, then kill me right here as well."

"What……?"

The youth twitched his eyebrows at what the girl muttered.

"If the Empire is going to fall, then I don't have any other place left where I belong to—."

"……"

The youth made an uncanny look, and stared at the girl for a while.

"……Kuhahahaha! Oh I see! So you were that kind of girl! One of that kind of people! This is a masterpiece! Hahahahaha! Hahahahahahahahahahaha!"

He suddenly put his hand on his forehead and laughed as if he was mad.

Despite that, the girl didn't show any response.

"This is boring…… I'm not going to kill you, idiot. What benefit will i get from killing someone amusing like you?"

As the man said that, he took off the other sword that was hanging on his hip along with its sheath and threw at towards the girl.

On the sheath that sunk down on the grass while it made a heavy sound, it had beautiful ornaments carved into it.

"I'll give that to you. The "power" that will change fate—that sword device that is. So flee while taking that with you. This castle will go down very soon, lady."

The man said that while putting on a smile that didn't carry any of the craziness he had till just now.

"……"

The girl picked up the sword silently.

She embraced the sword which was too big for a young small body like hers along with the sheath.

After the youth smiled fearlessly seeing that, he turned around and walked into the castle.

"Wait."

"What's wrong?"

The silver haired youth stopped due to the girl's voice, and he turned around reluctantly.

"What is that……?"

The girl pointed at the sky.

What was there was a devil that was destroying the Empire that was known as the absolute undefeated myth .

It flew in many directions at the sky where there were sparks. A single grey coloured Dragon that was causing

havoc by destroying Drag-Rides that belonged to the Empire one after another.

It was a giant jet-black Drag-Ride that had the same colour as the sky.

“Kukuku. ……No idea. Except, for the majority of the people in this town, you can call it the great hero that took down the horrible Empire.”

“A hero……?”

The man disappeared during the time the girl looked up once again.

She didn’t get any answers.

That’s why, the girl wished to live on until she found the answer.

Even the hot wind that came from inside the castle became violent, and caused the sparks that were falling down on the courtyard to make a swirl.

“……”

The girl went inside the water well while embracing the sword that was given to her by the youth.

When she went down the well using the hanging rope, there was a blocked hole near the water surface.

She used the key she was hiding inside her pocket. The girl stopped right before entering the passage.

She looked up very high to the night sky which was a battlefield as if she was being absorbed by it.

“Father…… I—”

The girl muttered as if she was dead.

Episode 1: The Intruder at Midnight

Part 1

There was a colour of the skin.

A white steam that covered all of the sight.

At the other side of the steam, there was a wall and a marble pillar that was visible due to being lit by the lamp .

And the feeling of the warm water that wet his cotton trousers.

No matter how you thought about it, this was a bathroom.

“……U-Umm?”

(How did this happen again……?)

That question was going through Lux’s mind.

“……!?”

Lux looked down while he tried not to look at the naked girls that were standing there shocked at the other side of the steam.

"……Fu."

Underneath Lux who was inside the hot water with his clothes on was a girl who made a laugh.

Unlike her slim body, there was a mature smile on her expression.

Her smooth white skin turned red due to being inside the bath where her cheek also became red.

(She's cute.)

He could have said that if he was looking at her from the side, but Lux not only couldn't speak, but also couldn 't move an inch due to the dangerous feeling and the steam coming out from the girl.

"……Hey, pervert. Do you have anything left to say before dying?"

Scary words came out from her lovely face where she had forcefully made a smile.

Well, it wouldn't be weird for her to be angry.

That's because—, he could see her.

Inside the spacious bathroom, the towel that was wrapped around her body fell and her fresh looking naked body became visible.

Her cute looking breast that was shivering while hitting back the hot water.

Her collarbone that rose above the hot water and the tight curve on her hips.

And also, even places below her silky stomach were—.

"……"

His fate might be decided with his next word.

Lux started to choose the words carefully with his panicked head.

(I, I should praise her first……!)

In the past when he did chores while working as a bar waiter, he was taught the technique of how to praise a girl.

Before he could come up with something, his honest opinion came out from his mouth.

"……Hmm, the thing is. You are cute. Your whole package itself is like that of a child……no, even though you seem young, you have quite the chest—and it's quite tempting. ……Wait, what the!?"

(I'm dead.)

(What on earth am I saying! That's not what I'm supposed to say!)

(Who was it!? The one who taught me the wrong way to say it!? That damn perverted bar owner!)

"……Fu."

The naked girl who heard that released a bitter laughter.

For an instant, she made a bright smile as if she was satisfied with it, and then—

"How long are you planning to ride on top of me, you fooooooool!"

She made an angry voice.

"Kyaaaaaaaah!?"

At the same time, there were many screams coming from the girls of the whole bathroom.

The naked girls started to throw anything they could find at Lux with all their might.

"I, I'm soooooooorry!"

Lux tried to escape in panic.

"H-How did it turn out like this!?"

With teary eyes, Lux started to remember what happened several hours ago with the bag he was carrying in his hand.

Part 2

"Stooooooooop!"

The voice he let out from his stomach echoed through the buildings.

The cross-shaped fortress town made from block of five towns, "Crossfield".

At the first district which was located at the centre of such place, there were two shadows that were sprinting.

One of the shadows that was running ahead was a cat with tiger stripes and it had a small bag within its mouth.

The shadow belonging to a small build boy was chasing after the cat with all his might.

The sprint started from the third district that is located to the west of the town shaped in a cross.

The boy, who already ran a distance which normally made you think whether you should take a cargo, had already ran across a single town, was already at his limit in terms of exhaustion.

Even so, the silver haired boy with a choker continued to run.

The girl from the liquor store who gladly allowed Lux who didn't have a place to sleep to stay over last night.

When he saw her again, the small bag that she was carrying had been taken by a cat nearby all of a sudden.

"Ahaha……, you know you don't have to force yourself?"

She put on a bitter smile when Lux was about to go after the cat, but—.

"I will definitely bring that back."

To serve and to help the people of this country.

That is an obligation and aim for Lux who is put in a special position of this country.

Even if that wasn't the case, he wouldn't allow the cat to run since it's a belonging that belongs to someone who had helped him.

Lux raised his spirit once again and sprinted up the slope that was located on the main street.

"……Oh, if this isn't the young lad. It's been a while. Will you be able to work at my place next time? I don't have much manpower to plant some seeds during this season……"

"I'm sorry! I'm in a middle of something, so I'll get back to you next time—"

Even though an old man stopped him from the side of the street, Lux replied back politely even though he's in a rush.

(This isn't the right time!)

Even though he was panicking in such a way, he saw an old woman with good physique far away this time.

"Oh my, its Lux. Can you help out at my kitchen next time? It's almost the time for the anniversary for the establishment of the New Kingdom of Atismata. You can also make a bit of dishes fitting for a party, right?"

"I'll come to you when the time comes!"

Lux took out a notepad and a pen quickly from the bag equipped on his belt and wrote down some memo.

He was out of luck to have shown some confidence due to the cat slowing down its pace up the slope.

“What, you came back from the kingdom? You should have come to my atelier to give your greetings to me. You were still in the middle of your training as a blacksmith at my place.”

The stern-looking worker turned around and said that to Lux.

“Umm, I have a bit of free time in five days so—”

“Hey, Lux. Can you help out at taking care of the cow—”

“Can you become a play buddy for my daughter—”

“Hold on a sec……, I can’t! I’m sorry, I can’t do all of this now!”

He was trying to write all of that down but had put away his notepad and gave up.

Now wasn't the time to taking request for his "labour" .

His first priority was to capture the cat.

Putting that in his head, Lux sprinted as he put the last energy he had in his legs.

One hour later. About time when it became dusk.

"I, I should have given up already……"

Possibly due to the labour work Lux had done from morning to noon, he was simply exhausted.

Apparently it was a part of organisms' instinct to chase after those who ran away from them.

Despite breathing violently, he climbed up a tall wall and continued to chase after the cat.

"Huh……? Where is this place?"

For an instant, Lux panicked thinking that he had entered military area due to the spacious area and atmosphere. But there should be something else in this first district of the central.

(Then I would be able to come up with an excuse.)

As he thought that, the cat climbed onto a different building while it carried the girl's bag in its mouth.

"W-Why did you have to go over there……!?"

Lux didn't have a choice but to kick the wall and jump onto the other roof.

Since he had experience repairing roofs many time as a part of his labour, he had good grasp of climbing the roofs safely.

He wouldn't have to do this normally, but he was already doing it basically due to obstinacy.

"—Alright! I've finally arrived!"

There was basically no place left to go, so Lux closes the distance between him and the cat slowly.

He then became resolved and went for the cat.

"Nyaa!"

He will obviously lose to the cat in terms of speed, but his target was the girl's bag from the beginning.

When Lux grasped onto the shoulder belt of the bag with his fingers, the cat finally let go off the bag it was holding onto.

"Hooray!"

(I finally retrieved it!)

Lux started to smile due to the relief and accomplishment.

This might be a small achievement, but this was still an act of goodwill.

(If I report this to the administration, they may help me by lowering the debt I have by a bit.)

"……No, this kind of selfishness isn't right."

No matter how much huge debt Lux had been burdened by this country, he should simply be happy that he was able to become a help for someone.

"Now then. If I don't get back soon—"

It has completely become dusk all of a sudden, so the surrounding has become dark.

(Not being able to see the surroundings once I become too focused on things is my bad habit.)

As Lux reflected on his own action, he was about to jump of the roof, but—

Crack!

A nasty sound like that was made.

"Eh……?"

The source of the sound came from the single part of the roof Lux was holding onto while he put all of his weight on it.

"H-Hey!? Don't tell me this is—"

Lux tried to get away from the spot in a hurry.

But he was too late.

While the crack was made below his hand while making so much sound, the speed of it breaking increased and then shattered.

“Uwaaaaaah!?”

Lux fell along with the sensation of losing the sense of his weight.

Splaaaaaaaah……!!

Lux fell into the water after a second.

“Uwaaaah! Cough! ……Huh?”

Apparently there was water under him.

Lux became relieved for a moment that he wasn’t injured, but he realised the strangeness right away.

(This is—a hot water?)

When he looked, his body from his hips and below was covered by hot water.

At the other side of the white steam, he was able to see an expensive looking marble pillar and wall due to the faint lamp that made the surroundings look orange.

“Don’t tell me this place is—”

Lux realised it the moment he was trying to grasp hold of the situation.

The fragments of the roof he fell from.

Those fragments fell, and even from above the small build girl who was nearby—.

“Look out!”

Lux jumped towards her by reflex to push her away and jumped on her.

「……え、えっと？」
どうしてこうなったんだっけ……？
そんな疑問が、ルクスの脳内を
ぐるぐると駆けめぐり、
ループする。

Part 3

"How long are you planning to ride on top of me, you fooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!"

—And Lux's conscious connects to the present.

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

Several loud screams echoed throughout the bath.

"I-I'm soooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!"

Bath tub, chair, soap. Various things were thrown out, and Lux retreated towards the washing place.

(What do I do? To think that I would fall into the women's bath of the large public bath…!?)

Starting to despair so, Lux confirmed that there was a girl's pochette, which got a little wet with hot water, in his hand.

"I-I'm sorry. I-I fell here because the roof broke; I just wanted to get this back—"

While turning his face away from the girls' naked bodies, Lux hung up the pochette which he had in his hand.

Then, the pochette's mouth opened and two pieces of clothes fell flutteringly.

"Huh…?"

It was two pieces of underwear white above and below.

The owner of the underwear was certainly a woman, but—.

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah! Underwear thief! On top of being a peeping tom, he's an underwear thief!"

"The guards! Call the guards quickly!"

"Fetch your swords! Legitimate self-defense is approved as of now!"

"P-Please wait a minute! This isn't mine, um — it belongs to a girl who happened to pass by—!?"

As he desperately tried to explain, Lux noticed.

(Damn! Any kind of excuses won't work!?)

"How to put it, um, sorry!"

As Lux hurriedly jumped out of the bathroom, he passed through the dressing room and started running.

He had the feeling that there were girls who were taking off their clothes also there, but he decided to pretend that he saw nothing.

"H-How did it turn out like this…!?"

"Catch him! Don't let him escape!"

Lux, who somehow managed to escape the danger zone, while being chased by girls who wore their clothes, ran with all his energy in an unknown building.

A red carpet of high quality was spread out on the floor.

There were a large dining room like a party hall, a playroom and countless guest rooms.

Refined paintings and furnishings were put here and there.

“Huh? This building is—”

At first, he thought that he fell into a high-class hotel with a large bathroom, but it was too wide for it.

It was not the Imperial Court of the Capital, why was there such a building in this Fort city—?

“Ah! He’s there! The pervert who touched my chest is here! Bring me a spear quickly!”

When he was thinking so, the girls who ran into him in the front suddenly screamed.

“Wai…!? How did it become something this big!?”

No…, since he was chased as he ran away, if he wanted to prove his innocence, he should just behave himself, but — he instinctively ran away.

Like wanting to chase when one runs away, wanting to run away when being chased may also be instinct of a creature.

Lux ran while thinking such a trivial thing in the corner of his head.

“I-It's already hopeless! I’ll just go through with it—”

For now, he had to run away on until the uproar settled down.

When he arrived at the entrance of this big building while thinking so,

“Eh—!?”

Lux stopped, and once again doubted his own eyes.

Under the stairs of the colonnade where he stood, there was a large space decorated with a chandelier of candles.

Three girls armed with swords were standing there.

“Royal Military Academy regulations, article 18.”

A quiet voice which was that of one of those three girls . It was emitted by the blue-haired girl with a dignified face.

The three girls’ figures and atmospheres were completely different.

However, only the uniform and the sword belt which they wore were alike.

“Regardless of within and outside of the academy, it is forbidden to draw out a sword device without the permission of a superior officer. However, only in case of flagrant delict’s confirmation or when danger befalls oneself is one allowed to draw sword and use a Drag-Ride.”

With a well-projected voice in the large entrance, the blue-haired girl smiled.

Lux who heard it forgot even to give an explanation to the girls and was driven in confusion.

…Eh!?

Just now, what did she say?

Sword device and — Drag-Ride?

Why did these names come out from such girls—?

"Hmph. For a pervert, you are the first with the best look so far. You're good looking enough to be even added as a candidate for my marriage meeting."

"Um, sorry. A while ago, what did you—?"

To the dazzlingly beautiful blue-haired girl who seemed to have the leader status, Lux asked.

"But, it's regrettable. There is no pervert who creeps in this women's dormitory and succeeded in escaping when being found by the us — the Triad."

"Eh!?"

Women's dormitory? What is she talking about?

"Let's do it. Tillfarr! Nokuto!"

"OK!"

"Yes, my lord. But, just in case please be careful. Sharis."

The blue-haired girl called Sharis and the two girls who were standing still on both her sides.

These three girls simultaneously unsheathed their swords.

With a dark gray blade, a sword on which a shining silver line floated — sword devices.

"No way!?"

When Lux opened his eyes wide in surprise, he heard Sharis' voice.

"—Come forth, Wing Dragon of the crest which is the symbol of power. Fly in accordance with my sword, < Wyvern>!"

At the same time, the space of the sword tip which Sharis swung shook and warped.

What gathered there at high speed were grains (particles?) of light.

Countless pale lights tinged with undulation formed one single entity.

"…!?"

What appeared was a mechanical dragon twice as big as a human.

A streamlined form where metals with an acute angle were connected lay innumerably on top of one another.

The wet luster was abominably beautiful like an embezzled famous sword.

"A Drag-Ride!? Why—"

Drag-Rides.

They were ancient weapons which were summoned by drawing sword devices used as a pair, mechanical armors, which copied legendary dragons, worn on one's body and with which one acquired the war potential of thousand soldiers.

Seven Ruins were discovered in the world.

Those weapons which were excavated from there possessed power enough to overturn the war concept, which had been cultivated several hundreds of years in the past, in an instant.

Humans who wore those Drag-Rides and could master them were called Drag-Knights.

But, Drag-Rides were scarce and very expensive and only knights of the Kingdom and some influential persons could basically possess them.

Why do these girls possess them—

"Connection On."

Sharis muttered, during the opportunity when Lux was dumbfounded.

The blue streamlined machine opened from within, and was unfolded to innumerable parts.

The parts went towards Sharis' both arms, both legs, trunk and head, connected at high speed — it was equipped.

The Drag-Ride covered its master's body with non-stopped movements and changed into armor.

"Oh my, did you creep in here without even knowing where it is? But, it's useless even if you are befuddled, Pervert-kun. Give up and make a Dogeza[1] there. If you do so, I can get it over with about ten whiplashes."

"Uh-huh. Peeping is a crime."

"Yes, my Lord. Either way, you will be punished."

At the words of Sharis who was the leader, the girl with a light tune, Tillfarr and the girl with a calm atmosphere, Nokuto agreed.

These two girls were also wearing other kinds of Drag-Rides on their bodies and took a stance of combat as well.

"…Ah, wait a minute!?"

Isn't this a very dangerous situation?

Within a building like this — no, in the first place, it wasn't an equipment to use against a flesh-and-blood opponent!

"Haa!"

Sharis who wore <Wyvern> on her body kicked the floor and flew.

From the armor of both wings of legs and back, she sprayed wind wearing light.

With a single leap from the edge of the entrance of the building, she attacked Lux who was in the open ceiling of the second floor.

She greatly swung the arm covered with metal armor and suddenly struck it as she used it like a sword.

"Uwaaaaaaaah!?"

Lux abruptly turned sideways and dodged it.

Though he was able to evade it by a hairbreadth, the wooden handrail which was over there was smashed to pieces.

“Oops! Did I hold back the speed too much?”

“No! You use too much power! I’d have died though!?”

While putting a riposte to the surprised Sharis, Lux went down the stairs as he rolled over.

Then, the Drag-Ride for land battle which was at the entrance up to now. Tillfarr who equipped a jade green Drag-Ride — <Wyrm> immediately blocked his way.

“Hyaffuuuuh. Uh oh, test, test[2]. Notification to Pervert-san there. As of now, your crime is light.”

“In a sense, I’m treated more severe than in an average punishment, though!?”

“It’s bad”, thought Lux while riposting.

The flight ability could not be fully used indoors; on the contrary, it became a hindrance to the movements.

That's why Sharis' flight general purpose Drag-Knight <Wyvern> was still good, but it was dangerous here.

The limbs covered with thick armors possessed a high mobility due to multiple variables frames and could let power likely to explode at any time swell.

After all, the land battle general-purpose Drag-Ride < Wyrm> was a Drag-Ride with property most suitable for close range combat.

"Well, anything is fine, so behave yourself. If you struggle strangely, it'll be rather dangerous."

"At this rate, I would rather be killed!?"

Lux put his feet on the handrail, and jumped down to the first floor without going down the stairs where the path was blocked.

However—,

"U-Uh-oh! I won't let you pass here!"

Floating a confident smile, Tillfarr instantly stood in the way.

Together with the armor worn on her body, she made a side fall down centering on the handrail of the stairs and landed.

A Drag-Ride was not just a merely heavy and hard armor.

The kinematic performance of the installation part was also greatly strengthened by the energy brought from the Force Core which was the Drag-Ride's power

"Haaah!"

The right arm of Tillfarr clad in that armor was swung downward.

"Kuh…!?"

BANG! With a crushing sound, the wooden floor was smashed and dust soared. There were a light shout and movement, but the power was very great.

While Lux shuddered at the performance of a Drag-Ride which he felt with his own body—.

"…Huh?"

Tillfarr wearing <Wyrm> looked at the floor where her fist was driven in.

Its disappeared.

The figure of Lux, in front of whom she displayed her power just now, and who should be surprised.

“Under the floor! Tillfarr!”

“Eh…?”

Sharis’ dignified voice overhead reached Lux who ran under the floor.

The blow which Tillfarr let out as intimidation.

He went through the hole which it made, escaped under the floor and was running.

“Mmm…”

When Tillfarr who was pointed out looked into the hole of the floor with a discontented face,

“Don’t chase him, Tillfarr.”

Sharis' calm voice stopped Tillfarr.

"No matter how effective <Wyrm>'s maneuverability is, the bottom of the floor here is too narrow. If you destroy the dormitory any further, it'll be a written apology. I won't chase him anymore, either."

"But, but! If we let him escape like this—"

"It's all right. Nokuto has already moved. She won't let him escape."

While calming Tillfarr, Sharis let her gaze wander about at the surroundings.

"But, what is the meaning of this? He manages to hold on without equipment… Those movements. It was as if he saw through the special characteristics of our Drag-Rides in an instant—"

To the perplexity of the girl who was usually very confident, Tillfarr tilted her head to the side.

"Hmm? What is it? Sharis."

"Silver hair and black collar. No…, don't tell me that boy is—"

With a serious tone, she just coughed so.

Part 4

"Uwaaaaaaaah!"

Escaping to the outside of the building from under the floor, Lux dashed on the road of the ground.

The <Wyvern> of Sharis and the <Wyrm> of Tillfarr.

Also the moment when he escaped from two general-purpose types Drag-Rides.

The third person — the girl named Nokuto came chasing Lux.

Her orange Drag-Ride was a general purpose Drag-Ride called <Drake>.

In contrast with the flight type <Wyvern> and the land battle type <Wyrm>, it was a type classified into special equipment (customized) type.

Although it was a Drag-Ride equipped with special functions such as searching for the enemy, camouflage, support, assistance, restoration and the like, and its basic

performance (ability) was somewhat lowered, its strength under a specific situation surpassed the other two.

Its special characteristic — visually checking Lux even within the darkness by means of the goggles which were worn on her head, Nokuto accurately ran after him.

“Stop. If you don’t stop, I will shoot. If you stop, I will shoot kindly.”

At Lux who ran in the vast site towards the main gate, Nokuto called out to him while chasing him.

Needless to say that Nokuto clad in <Drake> was above in speed.

However, Lux ran as he wove his way through the bush with many trees and weakened her momentum of chase.

“Kindly? What do you mean!?”

Lux answered only with his voice without looking back.

“Yes. It'd be great if you didn't die. In that sense.”

"It was only the problem of feelings!?"

"Yes. And, I will do so that you won't suffer as much as possible. In that sense."

"You have the atmosphere of 'however much I kill you , it won't be enough.'!?"[3]

As expected, I couldn't stop her.

I will be killed if I stop.

And just in case, if his identity was exposed, it would become something terrible—.

"Yes. —Then, it can't be helped."

At the same time she leaked such a dangerous mutter, Nokuto set up a Breath Gun.

It was a rapid-fire (blaze) type rifle which let the Drag-Ride's energy converge and began to shoot.

It was an armament of low power against a Drag-Knight, but if received it with a human body, one would fall easy victim.

"Kuh…!"

Lux, who sensed the presence where the trigger was pulled on his back, jumped diagonally forward with all his strength.

From within the darkness in order to conceal his figure , to the way to the main gate brightly illuminated.

There — there was a bonfire to illuminate the passage up to the building.

"…!?"

The next moment, Nokuto obstructed the goggles of the armor with her hand.

Because the bonfire itself was used as an obstacle (wall), it was too dazzling in the view which raised sensitivity.

"Yes. It looked like you know the <Drake>'s special trait. However, with only that—"

The view sensitivity which was provided through the goggles of the <Drake> could be immediately adjusted.

When Nokuto exposed her face which she covered with her hand so as to take aim with the Breath Gun again,

“—!?”

Before her eyes, fire was approaching.

It was firewood with fire that was a part of the bonfire. Lux which gripped one of it threw it aiming at Nokuto’s rear.

“Kuh…”

She swung the armored arm in a hurry and flipped the firewood.

With a Drag-Knight as opponent, ordinary attacks would not work; throwing of smoke screen would be better[4].

But, at that opportunity where Nokuto suddenly stopped, Lux reached up to the way near the main gate.

Exactly at that time, a girl wearing the same uniform as Nokuto and company walked as she slowly headed to the women's dormitory from the main gate.

Since there was danger of involving the girl, she could no longer shoot with the Breath Gun.

While thinking so in the corner of her head, Nokuto was astonished.

"Why? It can't be…"

No matter how much they were going easy on him, to succeed in escaping against three Drag-Knights without equipment—.

"Who is he? That boy—"

"Ok, with this, I somehow—"

Lux looked back behind and checked that Nokuto lowered her gun.

It would not be wise to escape as is though.

When the other side settled down, he would properly explained himself and apologize.

"____"

When he thought so, as he noticed before his eyes, the girl was there.

The breathing of Lux who was running away with all his power stopped for an instant.

It was a beautiful girl.

She had a slender and well-proportioned body, noble features and cold eyes.

Just like a perfect work of art, the girl, showing neither strain nor slack, was standing before Lux.

"You do not need to chase him. Since I will stop him."

"Krulcifer-san…"

The girl in front of him lightly raised her right hand called out to Nokuto behind.

To her movements which had not that much hesitation , Lux instinctively stopped.

“Haa, Haa… Um… Excuse me. I’m, errr—”

From the building behind, screams such as “pervert!” or “underwear thief!” could be heard small.

“Yes, I know.”

Looking at Lux who hurriedly tried to explain, the girl smiled.

“What a fairly pretty peeping tom, pervert and underwear thief, eh. He’s still a child.”

“Eh…!? …N-No…, I—”

While shaking, Lux was, just a little, irritated.

Certainly the girl in front of him has a grown-up atmosphere, but she should be about the same age as him .

And yet—.

"…I may not look like this, but I'm 17 years old. Well, I 'm often told that my face looks childish, but—"

Forgotten that he was in a situation where he was cornered, Lux rebutted.

The fairylike girl suddenly showed a sad expression.

"…Is that so. But, I'm sorry. I don't like it, but even with a child as opponent, I can't overlook an offender."

(C-Child, child, doesn't she care about what someone told her…!?)

In a part totally unrelated to this turmoil, Lux inwardly decided further.

He understood that he, who suddenly plunged into the large public bath and could not make any excuses, was totally in the wrong.

But, be that as it may, there was the problem of pride.

Even though he might not like this, he intended to pile up (acquire) even the training of hand-to-hand combat as such.

In that case—.

I will show her how much even that 'child' can do as such.

Of course, he did not intend to attack her or even use attacks as intimidation from the start.

He would dodge her and escape outside with just mere footwork.

"…Haa!"

With such a scream, Lux began the bout.

In order to dodge the girl in front of him, he made a feint to the left, turned and went to the right.

The girl could not react. He overtook her.

The moment when Lux believed so—,

"—You're naive, eh."

At the same time as the voice of the girl called Krulcifer, the world turned upside down.

"Eh—!?"

After the question of the moment, a shock ran throughout his body.

What on earth—

"Well then, I leave the rest to you. I'm going to the bath. There is no more peeping tom, is there?"

Soon after having heard her indifferent voice, Lux's field of vision blacked out.

It was after he woke up later that he noticed that it was due to the shock when he was flung by Krulcifer.

The long first day ended, and began.

Episode 2: Academy for Noble Children

Part 1

"Haah… I've done it now."

In a gloomy basement, Lux Acadia woke up.

It was enclosed by stone walls and iron grills; a plain isolation cell with one bed and a bathroom.

Neither handcuffs nor fetters were attached on him, but all his personal belongings were confiscated.

Of course, even the two Sword Devices which were hung to his waist. A stolen knife, a tool kit and even the pochette which he got back from the cat were seized.

Though he did not know the exact time, as he saw light coming in through the skylight, Lux guessed it was probably the time of breakfast.

"What a bummer! Even though a work reservation was made today…"

With a sigh, when he carefully though about it, he noticed that it wasn't the time for that.

"I mean, my real identity was also completely exposed …"

Lux's characteristic — his silver hair inherited from the Old Empire's royal family.

And, the black collar which showed the "criminal" who received amnesty from the new royal family.

With that much evidence gathered, his identity had probably been already specified.

The Old Empire Acadia which had laid out tyranny for a long time, was destroyed by a coup d'état.

It was about five years ago that Lux who was a survivor of the old imperial family was released by the amnesty of the New Kingdom Atismata—, and signed a contract with the condition of "undertaking miscellaneous affairs of any people".

The contents of the miscellaneous affairs varied from domestic servant, bar waiter, carpenter and blacksmith to field work.

At the beginning, alone without doubts, he managed the work given by the New Kingdom as if it was a matter of course, but now he was acknowledged for being a " convenient guy" by various people, up to a schedule of one month later, he had become so popular that he was swamped.

In order to handle a new request this time too, Lux had plans to head to a certain place, but—

"No matter how you look at it, I won't make it in time for work…"

Looking at a page of his notebook, the only thing which was not confiscated, Lux grumbled.

Even though the job schedule is still tightly packed.

From the afternoon to the half-day rest, he was out of luck to have come across that cat.

"If I drop the job that I already promised to do, my debts will increase again. What on earth should I do—"

"Are you awake? Prince."

"Uwah…!?"

Lux was startled by a voice which he suddenly heard.

Before he was aware, on the other side of the iron grill, one girl was standing there.

With blond hair in which one part was tied up with a black ribbon, and deep crimson pupils, sharp like the point of a sword.

Wrapping her body in a white uniform, she displayed a smile which somewhere had a shadow.

"Errr, you're—"

It was a light-complexioned girl with a height slightly lower than Lux's and a small stature.

Nevertheless, the girl's presence was fearfully strong.

She was clad in fearless, strong and absolute self-confidence which did not let anyone get closer.

It was a girl who gave the impression of having both sweetness and heat just like an ignited cake containing plenty of alcohol.

"Fufufu" that girl suddenly laughed in a low voice.

"Thank you for the help last night. Incidentally, it was a wonderful pick-up line. To the extent that I was unintentionally charmed."

"…Ah!?"

For an instant, Lux raised his voice.

He remembered!

She was the girl whom he had held down by force when Lux fell into the bathroom last night —

To the presence which got filled with the girl's anger, Lux felt cold sweat streamed down his back.

"Fufufu. Well, there is something I really want to tell you though. Besides, the Principal wants to talk with you . Follow me."

As she turned her smile which had a shadow somewhere to Lux, the blond girl opened the lock of the prison.

"…The Principal?"

"Hou. You have an honest face, and your mouth also stands. Do you intend to say that you creep in this girl's dormitory without knowing?"

"Eh… Eeeeeeeeeh?"

At the girl's reply, Lux raised a voice of surprise.

He hurriedly took out his notebook and looked at today's date.

[Workplace] Fort City, "Cross Feed" Academy.

[Client] Principal, Relie Aingram.

[Work contents] New Kingdom, Maintenance of Drag-Rides in the fourth Machine Dragon Hangar.

"Th-Then, don't tell me here is… where I was scheduled to come work at, this time —"

The Girl's academy of Drag-Knights founded by the New Kingdom Atismata.

That's why the girls who had attacked me yesterday were using Drag-Rides, huh.

As Lux who realized it was standing petrified and half amazed,

"Lizsharte Atismata."

"Eh…?"

From the girl in front of him, words and a smile came back.

"It's my name. New Kingdom First Princess — commonly known as the Scarlet Princess. I'm the Princess of the New Kingdom which destroyed your empire five years ago. Nice to meet you, Prince."

Plop, his shoulder was tapped by the smiling girl.

Her eyes were not particularly laughing.

"Eeeeeeeeeeh!?"

Lux's scream echoed in the underground prison.

Part 2

"Phew… then in the end, let's say that this time was an unfortunate accident, okay? Lux Acadia-kun."

Lux who went to the Principal room was receiving an explanation from Principal Relie about the school itself which was the scheduled workplace at the same time as he talked about the circumstances which led to this uproar.

This was the academy of Drag-Knights officer candidates managed by the New Kingdom Atismata.

It was a place which trained the so-called officer — high-rank persons even among the government officials including military and civil officials, and moreover speaking in detail—

"An academy which trained humans engaged in Drag-Rides, huh…?"

"You can say that."

At Lux's question, Principal Relie nodded with a smile.

Although the Principal, she was still young.

She was probably in her late twenties or so. Even if one said teacher, the woman of allowable looks called herself Relie Aingram.

She herself was also the daughter of a financial group which held a market directly associated with the nation, in other words one of the native cased young ladies.

And — she was one of the few acquaintances of Lux who was from the former imperial family.

Both the Drag-Ride and the Sword Device were weapons which were used as a pair.

Drag-Rides were usually enshrined to a place called " hangar" in various places; by pulling out the Sword Device from the scabbard and pushing a button in the grip, one could transfer — summon the matching Machine Dragon.

With weapons other than Drag-Rides, such a thing was not possible.

It was a possible feat precisely because there were the Mithril Dite, metal which turned into light and enabled the metastasis of the space, and the Force Core, a nuclear stone which was the source of power of a Machine Dragon.

The structure of the transfer itself was not yet clarified.

That the Drag-Rides were ancient weapons excavated from the ruins, and that the investigation of the ruins themselves was not readily progressing due to certain circumstances was the main cause.

But even so, the power which the Drag-Ride held hid a too extraordinary power to refrain from use by the reason “the technology cannot finish clarifying it”.

Therefore, the competition on the survey (research?) about the structure and even the principle clarification of the Drag-Rides was carried out intensely in each nation.

“It has been more than ten years since the Drag-Rides have been discovered from the ruins. Their use has almost been prohibited to us women, due to the trend and the system of the androcracy[1] that the Old Empire laid. But—”

As Relie cut her words, Lizsharte who was standing beside Lux suddenly opened her mouth.

“With the coup d’état five years ago, that perception completely changes after what the New Kingdom established. Aside from the exercise aptitude to use for the handling, the data reported that the compatibility aptitude of the airframe control of women was far above,

and thereafter, they established a special training organization, and concentrated their efforts on that upbringing in order to prepare Drag-Knight officers who won't lose to those other countries— something like that. ”

“Yes, that's right.”

To Lizsharte's supplement, Relie nodded.

Drag-Rides were super weapons to the extent that they rendered the existence of swords, guns, cannons, and horses which were the main force war, nonexistent.

Since their appearances, one already came to the point where it was impossible to talk about anything without words including war, diplomacy, commerce and industry.

Taking that into consideration, even Lux knew at least that a Drag-Knights training institution existed.

However—

“B-But, why was I called?”

It was the principal Relie who made the request of work.

As Lux asked about that with a bemused expression—,

“Oh my. I see that the “weakest undefeated” of all people is quite modest, eh.”

A seemingly mature, teasing smile returned.

“Weakest undefeated”.

An Official Mock battle which made use of Drag-Ride was held once a month in the coliseum of the royal capital.

As there was also a prize depending on the military record, it was the nickname attached to one who boasted of the most participation frequency from his combat style , and Lux was called so, but—

“It’s probably strength in no way inferior to that of Lizsharte-san who is one of the best users even in this academy. I think that it’s by no means an inappropriate job for you though.”

"…Hou."

As if to disapprove Relie's words, Lizsharte twitchily shook her shoulders.

(I-I have a bad feeling about this…!)

"I-I don't mean that, it seems that this place is a girl's academy, so for me to work here—"

"It's regrettable, but we lack manpower."

Relie answered before Lux's rebuttal.

"The history of Drag-Knights is rather short, isn't it? Most of the users of the Old Empire which monopolized the Drag-Rides for many years have died with the coup d 'état. In that case, though reluctant, I can do nothing but regularly invited a male cooperator. Be it a Drag-Ride's mechanic or a Drag-Knight."

"…I can hardly do maintenance, you know?"

"You just have to learn hereafter. Just having a prerequisite knowledge as a user is valuable."

Relie replied immediately.

"The New Kingdom fourth Machine Dragon hangar is located in the premises of this academy. Your work is there, so from today I will have you go by there three times a week. It's dirty, the work is hard and there is also the danger of injury. I can't give such a job to young ladies from good families, can I? Don't you think that you should also feel honored and privileged to have been born male?"

With a teasing voice, Relie smiled.

"……"

(She's pushy as usual, eh…)

Lux thought as he smiled wryly.

It had already been several years since he had met Relie for the first time, but nothing about this quite indifferent personality, deftness and malice had changed.

She should be the eldest daughter of the Aingram House, the big mercantile House of a financial combine class, but she was quite unique.

When Lux inwardly sighed, Relie took another deep breath,

"I'm still thinking about what work to give you as a Drag-Ride user, so I will tell you soon —okay?"

"Right", when the conversation was settled,

"Principal. Can I have a little time?"

Suddenly, Lizsharte stuck out her hand and interrupted the conversation.

"I understood the story. But, we haven't admitted this man yet."

She stared at Lux with a sharp look and said.

The edge of her mouth made a faint smile.

"……"

Is she really a Princess, this child?

How to put it, I feel a really bloodthirsty presence.

No, well, I did such a thing in the bath, so it might only be towards me though.

"My doubt has not cleared up. This man is guilty of being a peeping tom, a molester and a pervert underwear thief. There is no way we would let such a 'man' work in this academy. I mean, we should first hand him over to the army. And we should judge him in a judicial place and let him get some fresh air after he ate smelly food for several years."

"N-No, like I said, it was a misunderstanding—!?"

Lux tried to object, but being thrown a glance at by Lizsharte, he shut his mouth.

"I see, he said that he accidentally intruded into the bathroom as he was chasing a cat. But, how can he prove that? Principal. I think that giving shelter to a criminal who is not worth trusting is rather dangerous."

"You're right. We are acquainted, so I know Lux-kun really well, but—"

Relie said that and smiled wryly.

"I can't assert at all that this uproar was really caused accidentally."

"Shouldn't you assert there!?"

With somewhat teary eyes, Lux complained.

He was sure that she would support him.

"But actually, no one can prove about whether or not it was on purpose. Then, he is also a victim in this matter, and so is Lizsharte-san who is the top student of the second year, too. May I leave his punishment to your discretion?"

"Eeeeeeeeeeh!?"

(Why you leave it to her!?)

Lux desperately swallowed the cry of his soul and endured.

As a pardon at the time of the New Kingdom establishment, Lux was forgiven for the crime of being former royalty and released on parole, but at the same time by the contract which he signed, he was charged with a debt of an amount equivalent to 1/5 of the national budget.

That such ‘offender’ Lux becoming a criminal furthermore was very inconvenient—

“Fufu.”

Lizsharte who saw that Lux panicked scornfully laughed in a low voice,

“Then, let’s see. I will give you one chance of redeeming yourself.”

“…Eh?”

“Whether you are really worth enough to work in this academy as a ‘male’ Drag-Knight. Or just a simple pervert. I will test your fighting spirit and ability.”

Saying so, Lizsharte touched the handle of the sword to her waist and at the same time slowly walked before the door of the principal’s room.

“If you are defeated by me, you will be taken to the prison as a criminal; if you win, I won’t mind you working by acquittal. The match will be a mock battle of a one-to-one fight using Drag-Rides. —It’s all right with that, isn’t it? Curious onlookers.”

The moment that Lizsharte said so and turned the doorknob of the room,

“Kyaaaaah…!?”

The female students who had gathered over the door noisily fell into the room and were overlapping on one another.

They were apparently concerned about the treatment of Lux whom they heard rumors about, and it seemed that they were listening outside, over the door.

“Spread it to everyone in the academy. The more spectators, the better. A show where the New Kingdom’s princess will beat the Old Empire’s prince.”

The female students who heard that raised happy voices and left.

“It has become something big! Lizsharte-sama challenges this pervert to a duel—”

“It seems that the other party is the ‘weakest undefeated’. Does anyone know the details?”

"In the first place, he is a prince of the Old Empire, isn't he? That underwear thief, I mean."

"Appearance-wise, he's my type — but it's a shame."

Hearing such voices along with Lizsharte who got out from the room, Lux became speechless.

At this rate, this talk would spread all over the academy before the duel.

"……"

Somehow, it has become something big…

"I wonder if I should review the educational system a little. Don't forget that this place is a diligent academy."

To Relie's amazed mutter, Lux unintentionally swallowed his words,

No matter how you look at it, it's your influence…

"By the way, Lux-kun. Before the duel, there is a place I want you to stop by a little."

"Errr… where is it?"

"The reception room immediately nearby. Your younger sister is waiting for you there."

"—Eh?"

To Lux who raised a surprised voice, Relie returned only a smile.

Part 3

"Geez, what is Nii-san doing? I'm amazed."

The Academy reception room for visitors.

As expected of an academy where noble children gathered, in this room which gave a high class impression along with the furniture and furnishings, two female students were standing stock still.

One was a calm black-haired girl who ringed a bell.

The other was a girl who had the same silver hair and the same collar as Lux.

Her graceful and calm atmosphere like a high class antique doll looked somehow more mature than her big brother Lux's.

"Um—, I'm sorry for a lot of things. Airi."

First of all, Lux lightly apologized to the girl, Airi Acadia who was his younger sister.

Airi who saw that shrugged her shoulders along with a sigh, and moved her gaze towards the girl beside her.

"She is my roommate in the girl's dormitory. Her name is— may I ask for it?"

"Yes. I am… first year, Nokuto Leaflet. I apologize for last night."

The girl who gave a quite calm impression softly bowed her head and stared at Lux.

Last night was the bathroom intrusion incident.

She was one of the tree girls who chased him at that time.

"It seems like you were really running after a pochette which was stolen by a cat. I am sorry for having treated you like pervert."

"I-I am sorry, too. Um—, I didn't think that there was underwear in it… But, what a relief. It looks like the baggage is perfectly safe."

He thought that she was a fairly severe child last night, but she apparently seemed to be an honest and good child.

(I'm happy that she believes me…)

As Lux looked at Nokuto and let his troubles melt—

"Um, though I'm sorry to interrupt your happy conversation."

Airi who was looking at their exchange with reproachful eyes coughed, seeming to be in bad mood.

"Because of Nii-san, it isn't time for that now though."

"Ah…"

The moment Lux came to his senses, Airi sighed once again.

"Hah… Even though for appearance's sake, I have told to my surroundings that you're a cool older brother, what on earth will you do about it? Peeping tom, underwear thief, molester. To think that a relative of mine is a criminal, please think about my position in the academy."

"F-For appearance's sake, huh… not that, like I said, it was a misunderstanding!?"

"Yes. I think that only your face seems like a Prince roughly. It is a little unreliable though."

"…You'll be cleaned off if you thought that she was praising you!?"

It was simply shocking.

As expected, this girl called Nokuto is a little strange.

"Shall I get down to the main issue?"

cough clearing her throat, Airi sat on the sofa.

As Lux did the same sat opposite to her, Nokuto poured tea in the tea cup from a teapot which had been prepared.

"To be frank. I think that it will be good that Nii-san occasionally sees painful experiences, but—"

"Cruel!?"

Not paying heed to Lux's reaction, Airi continued with a serious look.

"This time only is a little special. If Nii-san was to be caught, how will I be able to pay the debt alone?"

"……"

(It's a cruel way to put it…!)

The brother and sister of the Old Empire's royalty were coldly treated.

In the amnesty contract exchanged at the same time as the New Kingdom establishment, one became a "person in charge of odd jobs" and worked bearing a part of the national budget of the New Kingdom.

And the other would live in a place where the royal family's eyes would reach.

It was agreed that if Lux were to run away or commit misbehavior, Airi would be punished instead.

However, Lux had not thought of this agreement in itself to be dissatisfying.

Although there was the restriction that he must receive miscellaneous jobs from anyone, he was the “property of the Kingdom”, so he had not received compulsive treatment so far.

To begin with, it would not be strange even if the Old Empire’s imperial family, which had been exerting tyranny for many years, was killed with the unjust resentment of anyone.

In such a meaning, they were made to work to pay debt — so as to atone for their crime; and depending on the situation, it could be said that they were protected by the New Kingdom.

Well, there were also other little circumstances which were concealed though.

“With that said, Nii-san must win against Lizsharte-sama by any means necessary. However—”

Starting saying so, Airi faltered.

"Is that child strong?"

Lux asked.

This was because in the tournament of Drag-Knights held in the capital where he had fought, Lux had no memory of Lizsharte participating in it.

"We, students of the academy, are not admitted to participate in the tournament. It is also for the concealment of military strength, and if an officer cadet's student were to lose, it would not look good enough to be shown publicly."

"I see… which means."

"Yes, instead there is regularly something like a campus battle in this academy. Lizsharte-sama is currently undefeated. Moreover, after having begun to use a Divine Drag-Ride, she continued winning successive victories with an overwhelming strength."

Divine Drag-Ride.

Being able to handle it, which held a special power among the Machine Dragons would certainly mean that she was a powerful opponent.

To Airi's words, Lux was troubled,

"Well, it'll be a little tough, I guess."

As he scratched his head…,

"Yes. Then, I will advise a way so as to be able to withdraw the duel to Lizsharte-sama."

"Oh my. You shouldn't, Nokuto."

With a gentle smile, Airi stopped Nokuto who offered so.

"It's best that he takes responsibility for his own actions himself. Geez, since a long time you immediately act when you make up your mind and you can't become calm at all, so you only encounter such bad experiences."

"Uwah, you're cruel!? Even though I have been doing my errands of "person in charge of odd jobs all along since the day of the contract!?"

"Hmm. Then Nii-san, are you saying that you want to become the hostage of the New Kingdom in my stead?"

Airi took up Lux's rebuttal with a cool expression.

And just now, she ran her white fingertips onto the back of Lux's neck.

"…!? Wait, Airi, what are you—!?"

As she approached his face until a distance as to seem to kiss him, Lux got excited.

"Nii-san. Being watched as a hostage is really hard, you know? Because of this collar, I'm always seen by strange eyes from others. Even so, I earnestly think that it's my personality and the fruit of my efforts that enable me to maintain smooth human relations. Ah, and then, even I considerably contribute to the debt repayment after all, you know? If I concretely have to say how much I earn in the side job which extended until midnight while studying the deciphering of ancient manuscripts excavated in the ruins or the update of the Drag-Ride's manual in the academy—"

"U-Understood. It was my bad…"

"Fufu, I've won again. With this, it's 102 games, 102 victories. I wonder when the day will come when I will be defeated by Nii-san"

With a childlike smile, Airi abruptly stood up.

It's always like this…

In his fights of these several years, there was no precedent where Lux was able to win.

This young sister honor student had a weak constitution a long time ago and always clung to her mother and Lux, but now she was very strong.

As Nokuto found such an aspect of Airi unexpected,

"You get along quite well, eh."

She said and smiled wryly.

"Well then, shall we go already? Follow me."

"Go? To where?"

"To the Machine Dragon hangar. An airframe check before the mock battle is an indispensable matter in the

academy after all. Just in case, I will guide you up to there. And while we are at it, I will teach you a countermeasure against Lizsharte-sama."

Saying so lightly, Airi left the reception room ahead.

As Lux followed afterwards while sighing,

"Well but, if you haven't yet lost to anyone, I guess Nii-san is also like her, right?"

A voice full of conviction tickled Lux's earlobes.

"……"

And after heading to the Machine Dragon hangar which was away from the academy and having Lux's Sword Devices returned—

Finally, the time of the duel came.

Episode 3 - The Scarlet Princess

Part 1

"Well then, the Machine Dragon match between the New Kingdom's First Princess Lizsharte and the Old Empire's Seventh Prince Lux is about to begin."

At the same time as the voice of the teacher referee, the stage was wrapped in cheers and seething emotions.

The Drag-Ride practice field located in the school premises;

Fenced in with a circular stone wall, there was a broad ring spreading out to a mound.

At the center, Lizsharte and Lux were facing each other.

The ring at the center was low and the shape, which was loftier the more it went to the exterior, was reminiscent to that of the Coliseum of old times.

Strong lattices were stretched on the spectator seats, and in addition, several Drag-Knights constantly deployed barriers in order to protect students, so viewers did not have to worry about being affected.

As Lux looked around, not only a large number of female students, but even instructors seemed to have come to watch this duel which was supposed to be a private battle.

"I wonder why so many people have gathered…"

Under the watchful eyes of a great number of the school's staff, Lux became nervous.

I see that all of them have a little too much time to spare.

He was selfishly made an actor of an amazing show, but…

"Do you want to know the reason? Lux Acadia. The reason why I challenged you to a duel."

Standing in front of Lux, Lizsharte fearlessly smiled.

Both of them had not yet donned their Drag-Rides.

Wearing a “dress gear”, clothes which fitted on the body and were suitable for wearing a Drag-Ride, they were standing stock still on the ring.

After the match preparation was completed, they drew their Sword Devices and at the same time that the referee checked that they had mutually connected their Drag-Rides, the signal of the duel beginning would be given.

The rules used here were almost the same as those used at the tournament of the capital though.

“—Is it because I’m a Prince of the Old Empire?”

To the princess right before him, Lux asked.

The Old Empire which had spread a tyrannical rule for more than 100 years, and forced people to comply to the trend and system of androcracy.

The New Kingdom Princess would want to knock down the fallen Prince who was a survivor of that Empire.

Gender and nation. A duel which conceived both bonds.

From a spectator's point of view, there might certainly not be a more eye-catching show than this.

But—.

"I will tell you if you defeat me."

Lux was very concerned about this.

Was it really only because of that?

Lizsharte was certainly a belligerent girl.

But, shortly after Lux fell into the bathroom and pinned her down that time, the gaze which she directed towards him — was not just that of shame.

"Um, may I confirm one thing before the fight?"

"What? Did you get frightened? It will be unsightly to beg for your life at this late hour."

"Begging for my life…? So you really intend to kill me!? …It's not that I want to talk about. Um, if it's a draw, could we make it as if this match didn't happen?"

"……"

A moment of silence.

Suddenly, Lizsharte's atmosphere changed.

"Fufufu. Is it my imagination?"

To Lux's question, Lizsharte brushed up her honey-colored forelock and smiled.

"We're already at this stage, and I have the impression of hearing sleep-talking."

"It's not sleep-talking, I'm seriously—"

"I see. Then, that's good."

Lizsharte narrowed her eyes and put the handle of her Sword Device in her hands.

"If you can say that after being aware of my true identity, then that's still good."

Her piercing gaze gave a shiver to Lux.

That child is definitely not an ordinary Princess!

"Player Lux, get ready for the connection!"

At the same time, the teacher referee urged Lux.

"……"

Lux reluctantly pulled out his Sword Device.

From one of the sheaths of two different colors; the white one,

"Come forth, the Branded Wing Dragon which is the symbol of power. Obey my sword and fly, <Wyvern>."

While holding the button attached on the hilt, he shouted.

The pass code in order to transfer a Machine Dragon before oneself.

The silver lines of the sword blade which recognized the contractor's voice wore a blue-white light.

- kiin*. Particles of light gathered before Lux and a blue Machine Dragon appeared.

"Connect On"

As he muttered again, the armor instantaneously opened and covered Lux's body.

The head, both arms, shoulders, waist, legs and the wings and armaments.

The dress gears which were similarly excavated from the ruins efficiently conducted the energy from the Force Core and protected the equipped parts (of the body) as it also generated a powerful barrier, different from a common barrier, on its surface.

The machine armor which imitated a dragon was equipped as if uniting with Lux and he became a Drag-Knight of about two sizes bigger than the body of the person himself.

Ancient weapons excavated from the ruins.

That power which concealed a great military power was however quickly engulfed by a huge pressure on the opposite side.

"Is that other sword just for decoration? Lux Acadia."

"…!?"

At that instant, Lux opened his eyes wide.

Lizsharte's body was covered with a red Machine Dragon which he had never seen before.

The outward appearance was completely different from that of the three types commonly known as General-purpose Machine Dragons, that is, Flying-type Machine Dragons (Wyvern), Ground-type Machine Dragons (Wyrm) and the Customized-type Machine Dragons (Drake).

A red Machine Dragon much huger than Lux's appeared in front of him.

"New Kingdom royal family personal unit. Divine Drag-Ride — <Tiamat>. This Machine Dragon is on an entirely different level from those you know."

"……"

Divine Drag-Ride.

It's a rare species of Drag-Ride whose existence had only been confirmed for each species in the world.

Its airframe performance was far above that of a general-purpose Machine Dragon.

But—, at the same time, the consumption of both spiritual and physical strength and the processing degree of difficulty were also in a different league.

The possessing of a Divine Drag-Ride, where it would not be strange even if one were to die when using it, was severely restricted by the New Kingdom, and its use was only permitted to those with suitable ability.

In other words, the fact of being able to use it was proof of a peerless talent and unremitting efforts.

However—, while being aware of that fact, Lux remained calm.

(It's all right. —I should still have a chance.)

Lux's <Wyvern> was a basic general-purpose Machine Dragon, but its parts and armaments had been remodeled with a specialization in defense.

In the capital, the skill of the one called the "Weakest Undefeated" who managed the largest number of mock battle and yet had never suffered one defeat in a match.

Even if he were to have a Divine Drag-Ride as an opponent, he should be able to hold out somehow.

The audience which was lively and excited fell silent.

The high-pitched sound of the bell echoed to the ring as if to break the atmosphere which was strained to the limit.

"Mock Battle, Start!"

At the same time with the referee's voice, the two Drag-Rides began to move.

It was Lizsharte wearing <Tiamat> that flew first.

At the same time that the red Machine Dragon which bore the name of a Goddess handed down from the ruins flew up to the sky, she set up the Breath Gun — the large

gun in her right arm that was the Machine Dragon personal (exclusive) armament.

Lux drew out his Machine Dragon blade and tried to chase Lizsharte in the sky with his <Wyvern> which also possessed the flight function, but when he saw her setting up the Breath Gun, he stopped his movements in mid-air.

"No way, does she intend to shoot it right from the start…?"

Breath Gun.

So to speak, the main armament which envisioned strong flames harking back to a Dragon's breath.

A blow with a high temperature and impact, that loads the energy from the Force Core which is the power source and releases it. It held power, enough to easily blow up one building.

But, there was the part which required a "charging" until the firing and one could make enough distance for an evasive action; that a defensive stance could be taken was the flaw.

Actually, even Lux had currently taken a suitable distance enough to be able to evade it.

Therefore, the opening in a one-to-one fight was not something which one should quickly aimed at, but—

"Fufufu…!"

As if reading the intention of Lux, Lizsharte laughed.

And, the cannon's sight which was originally aimed at Lux abruptly deviated slightly sideways,

"…!?"

Boom!

It fired.

A light beam of high temperature with undulation was shot from the sky straight toward the ring on the ground.

But, it was of course, not aimed at Lux, so he would not be hit as long as he did not move.

Is it intended for a threat or a warm-up?

To Lizsharte's incomprehensible action, Lux's body slightly stiffened.

That moment—

"Ah"

Lizsharte who was far in the sky looked down at Lux and swerved her mouth.

In her right hand was the cannon which fired just now.

And her left hand—, was holding the hilt of the Sword Device.

The Sword Device was one of the control sticks to mentally operate a Machine Dragon and its armaments, in other words—

" —!?"

Suddenly, a shock as if being hit by a large hammer ran down Lux's flank.

He was flipped aside and thrust away along with the < Wyvern>.

In other words, Lux was pushed out to the trajectory of the original bombardment which Lizsharte shot by deliberately deflecting her aim!

"Wha…!?"

An inescapable timing where he was completely taken by surprise.

Although the armor of Lux's <Wyvern> had been tuned to be relatively thick, it would end with a single blow if he were to receive the attack of the main armament with its maximum output head on.

Lux instantly set up his blade diagonally so as to use it like a shield for the bombardment.

He fully poured energy from the Force Core and equipped it on the blade.

Originally, it was an ability to amplify destructive power, but by doing so, he would deflect the power of the bombardment and he himself would also be flipped off from the trajectory of the bombardment.

"Uh, ah…!"

Objects of high speed came flying while aiming at Lux who was blown off and was rotating in the air.

As he quickly swung the partially damaged blade and flicked off the four flying objects, they stopped in the sky and returned to Lizsharte's surroundings.

"That's—!"

"Hmm. You're better than I thought."

Lizsharte wearing <Tiamat> looked down at Lux and fearlessly smiled.

A little away around her, four huge arrowhead-shaped objects were floating.

"I never thought that you would escape my attack with only a sword, handling from that posture. It really hurts my pride. Should I say as expected of the "Weakest Undefeated"?"

"W-What did you just—!?"

Looking up at Lizsharte in the sky, Lux sweated.

"What's wrong? You've probably heard about my special armaments from your little sister, haven't you?"

"T-That's right, but—"

A special armament which only a Divine Drag-Ride could use.

Lux had also heard from Airi about the special armament <airborne Legion fortress> that <Tiamat> possesses.

There were long-range throwing weapons of small streamlined metals which were controlled and held a propulsive strength themselves.

Usually four of them were equipped to the airframe; after launch, the units could freely move, and directly impact damage to the enemy.

Of course, Lux also intended to be cautious because of that troublesome disposition, but—

"…Kuh!"

(But, no matter what, that way of using them—)

At the same time as the start signal, Lizsharte had launched the <airborne Legion fortress> to the side while flying, so that they would not be noticed by Lux. In addition, she aimed the Breath Gun at Lux.

A Divine Drag-Ride exceeded a general-purpose Machine Dragon in terms of output and efficiency.

When suddenly being aimed at by the main armament , anyone would focus his attention there.

As she deflected her aim to the side and fired and attracted Lux's attention towards his right side, she threw the <airborne Legion fortress> which she made take a detour from the left side so that they escaped his field of vision; then, she pushed him into the original trajectory of the main armament's maximum output and attacked him.

A one shot kill strategy.

Devil like tactics without any mercy.

What was frightening above all else was that there was no stagnation (moment of pause) at all to this series of actions.

No matter how excellent the tactics were, as long as there was any unnatural movement, it was possible to perceive and avoid them.

But, even in the mock battles in the capital, Lux had almost never fought against this kind of opponent so far.

Is she really a Princess of the New Kingdom? That child—

"Old Empire's Seventh Prince, Lux Acadia."

When Lux was recovering his balance, Lizsharte's voice came down.

"Honestly, I underestimated you, but I take back what I said. You aren't bad. Just a little, I'm impressed. That's why I'll take this opportunity to say it now. You'd better release (disarm) that <Wyvern> which is about to break and use that other Sword Device."

It was a tone of voice which contained a deep affection and which was somewhat gentler than before.

A small stir came from the surrounding audience seats .

"I don't know what kind of Drag-Ride it is, but it should be better than that partially destroyed one. Show it to me, your full strength."

"…Um. Then, may I again say one thing?"

To Lizsharte's words, Lux looked up at the sky.

The blade which was Lux's main weapon was already partially destroyed and the defense armor was also shaved off to one third, so it could no longer generate a complete defensive barrier.

The remaining equipment of his <Wyvern> was one Breath Gun for barrage shooting, three Machine Dragon claws blades (daggers) for close range combat as well as for throwing, and also one Wire tail for medium-range.

None of them was a weapon which could pierce through the defensive barrier and thick armor of <Tiamat >.

But—,

"I'm sorry—. I can't use this sword."

Even so, with a composed attitude Lux said that.

“So, if it becomes a draw at this rate, could we come to an agreement regarding this matter? Honestly, I’m tied up with other jobs. S-Sorry for the b-bath. I apologize—”

Lizsharte’s eyebrows became stiff from Lux’s words.

And, not only her cheeks, but also her whole face became red and the whole Machine Dragon's body shook .

Of course, Lux was speaking seriously.

But, she probably thought that she was being underestimated.

“Oh, I see. It sounds as though you’re not an ordinary — BUT A BIG FOOL!”

Lizsharte suddenly hung up her Sword Device to the sky and shouted.

“<Tiamat>! Reveal your real nature!”

At the same time as her voice, a big noise spread like ripples around the audience seats.

Immediately after, a dazzling light ran around < Tiamat> and something was transferred (summoned).

It was an auxiliary armament whose use was usually avoided because the burden (put on the body) was great.

It was a main armament two times bigger than the cannon set up a little while ago. That was linked — connected to <Tiamat>'s right shoulder and right arm.

"That's—!"

A huge gun barrel which had seven muzzles.

The Goddess Tiamat not only gave birth to an army of demons and controlled them, but she also turned herself into a seven-headed dragon.

Lux had only heard about that auxiliary armament which was called <Seven-Headed Dragon> from Airi, but—.

Seven Heads

"Are you good at dancing? Lux Acadia."

An absolute confidence and an intimidating smile.

「踊りは得意か？」

七つの砲口を持つ、巨大な砲身――

セブンスヘッズ
《七つの竜頭》！

Saying with a graceful voice, Lizsharte set up her Sword Device.

"My dance is a little rough. Entertain me, Prince."

Around her, the number of <airborne fortress>[Legion], which was four until a little while ago, increased; the number quadrupled — a total of 16 aircraft throwing weapons were floating in the air.

It looked like these arms were also transferred in by the Sword Device.

Logically speaking, the burden and processing degree of difficulty should also double in proportion to the number of the arms, but—

"Kuh…!"

Compared to that, Lux's equipment was extremely weak.

The airframe performance itself was still far inferior, too.

A too overwhelming military power difference.

But, precisely for this reason—, Lux perceived a chance of winning.

“P-Please wait a minute! Princess Lizsharte! Do you intend to kill your opponent? If you went as far as to use <Tiamat>’s auxiliary armament, no matter how much you hold back, it will still go beyond the scope of a mock battle!”

The instructors, responsible for monitoring, who saw that hurriedly tried to stop her, but,

“So they say, but? Do you want to throw in the towel? ”

To the question of Lizsharte who was floating in the sky, Lux shortly, but clearly—

“No — I don’t.”

Answered so.

“Then, perish in this place! With the pride of the Old Empire!”

At the same time Lizsharte shouted, she wielded her Sword Device.

At that moment, the throwing weapons which were floating whirlingly around her—, the sixteen <Legion Airborne fortresses> began to attack all at once.

Part 2

"Lux-san…"

Nokuto had been watching the mock battle which began with Lizsharte's fierce attack in the audience seating.

"Oops. This is terrible! We must quickly tell the teacher and stop her—!"

As expected, even Tillfarr, a girl with a usually light tone, said in panic.

Although there was just one grade of difference between them respectively Sharis, Tillfarr and Nokuto, they were called the "Triad" in the academy and they were also childhood friends.

The third year student Sharis whose father was serving as the vice-commandant of the New Kingdom army had the lead status with seniority. She enjoyed both play and study.

Especially, Sharis who had a strong sense of justice also volunteered to join the paramilitary section.

It was already five years since the New Kingdom was established.

Although the custom of androcracy was gradually dying out, the people's consciousness could not change immediately.

Even the people opposed to the new government itself and the kind of treatment towards women and riots were unending.

For this reason, she bore the pride of protecting the students from the male offenders who sometimes showed up in the academy, too, but—

"To think that such a fight would happen—"

By now, they realized that it was them who made that uproar that big a deal.

For this, the three girls felt some regret.

Incidentally, the three girls were in the end made to write a letter of apology about the matter where they destroyed the women's dormitory by using Drag-Rides as "they went too far".

"I'm sorry, Lux-kun."

At this rate, not only would Lux lose, worst, he might also die.

In the case that Lizsharte were to use <Tiamat> , the students who only possessed a general-purpose Machine Dragon would be no match for her.

It had only been once that she was seen going as far as to transfer the auxiliary armament.

The innumerable units which flew about freely inside the broad ring, <Airborne Legion fortresses>.

The main armament of super-heating power which completed its charge and would be shot if Lux were to stop moving even for a moment, the <Seven Heads Seven-Headed Dragon>.

There should be no means to go up against these two overwhelming powers with only a mere general-purpose Machine Dragon <Wyvern>.

“You do not need to worry. Sharis-senpai.”

Suddenly, Lux’s younger sister who was next to her — Airi called out to Sharis so.

“About that incident, it’s something that Nii-san did selfishly, so it’s the natural consequences of his own deeds. He holds an odd sense of justice, so he’s always dragged into unnecessary troubles. At first glance, he looks sensitive, but he’s just a softhearted and simple fool , so it can’t be helped.”

With a fairly serious look — no, even with a smile, Airi indifferently continued her words.

“…You’re an unexpectedly interesting child, you—”

When Sharis returned a wry smile seeing that she was so indifferent,

“But, even to such a hopeless Nii-san, there is only one thing that even I admit; he has a lot of good sides.”

Airi said so and gently pointed at the center of the ring .

With a smile tinged with a little pride.

“That’s—?”

When Sharis asked back and moved her gaze to the ring, it could be seen with a big noise.

“Once he has decided something, he will carry it out until the end.”

Part 3

Within the ring practice field, a fierce fiery whirlwind blew.

After being launched, the <Airborne Legion fortresses> attacked with their own propulsion.

Lux dodged all of the simultaneous attacks which consisted of a total of 16 units — by a hairbreadth, including the additional auxiliary armament.

“Kuh…!?”

Anxiety appeared on the face of Lizsharte who manipulated them by swinging the Sword Device in her left hand

Even though the offensive was completely one-sided, she desperately swallowed her voice, not shouting “why ?”.

Not even one of the units of <Airborne Legion fortresses> which she manipulated had been destroyed.

Lux just dodged and repelled them.

Only using the partially destroyed blade, the Breath Gun, the daggers and the wire tail.

Each of them was a basic weapon of a Machine Dragon , but Lux skillfully used them to defend against all the attacks.

Of course, it was not as if the attacks were not totally hitting him.

In fact, Lux's armor was also being torn off gradually and even the barrier which he had deployed was also running out of power.

The remaining arms (weapons) also got gradually damaged each time they repelled the <Airborne Legion fortresses>.

Nevertheless — he showed no signs of falling.

So, that's the reason why he is called "the weakest undefeated"!

Just five minutes since Lizsharte was going all out.

No, it was "already" five minutes.

It should be impossible for an ordinary general-purpose Machine Dragon to hold even dozens of seconds against a Divine Drag-Ride going all out.

That fact which was beyond Lizsharte's calculation restrained her tactical thinking.

She sent a fleeting glance to the big clock of the academy and checked the needles.

There were still about three minutes before the end of the match.

But, at this rate, Lizsharte's stamina would run out before the timeout.

"Lizsharte-sama!?"

A voice from a student in the audience seats reached her who was struck dumb.

"Kuh…!?"

The moment when she was distracted in thinking, she saw a dagger thrown by Lux approach.

It was too late to doge it.

“Don’t underestimate me!”

But, as Lizsharte wielded her Sword Device and pointed it out before her eyes, the dagger changed the trajectory as if being flipped by an invisible force and fell to the ground.

“…!?”

At that moment Lux’s complexion changed due to this mysterious phenomenon, Lizsharte inhaled.

“Haa. All right, the “weakest undefeated”! In order to express my respect to your skill, allow me to show it to you! The Divine Raiment of my <Tiamat>, that’s!”

“…Eh?”

Divine Raiment—。

The moment when he heard these words, Lux stiffened for a short moment.

“Prostrate yourself under the name of God! <Heavenly Voice>!”

At the same time with a loud voice, Lizsharte once again pointed to Lux with her Sword Device.

That moment, the <Wyvern> that was flying in the sky at high speed until now fell to the ground.

The armor leg which held out suddenly sank along with the foothold.---how does this sentence fit with the current context/situation?

“This is—!?”

Divine Raiment was a special ability which only a Divine Drag-Ride possessed.

It was said that this ability existed only for the Divine Drag-Ride type and the true nature of each of the Divine Drag-Rides was almost unknown.

From the information he also heard from Airi, there was not this (this was not in it).

Judging from the strong burden put on his whole body along with the Drag-Ride, and the movement of the dagger which was stopped a little while ago, <Tiamat>’s Divine Raiment seemed to control gravity.

But, the situation had already been checkmated when he realized it.

The <Airborne Legion fortresses> circled at high speed like a tornado around Lux, blocking any escape paths. And,

"—It's over. Fallen Prince."

<Tiamat>'s auxiliary armament, the huge gun connected to the right shoulder and right arm.

The <Seventh Heads> aimed at Lux.

(…To think that she even uses the Divine Raiment! I have no other choice, but to do it.)

Lux instantly resolved himself for a certain thing — at that time,

"—Wha?"

Kaboom!

Along with this sound, Lizsharte which wore <Tiamat > violently inclined to one side.

Almost at the same time, the gravity exerted on Lux and his <Wyvern> was also released.

Lizsharte seemed unable to fully grasp what happened and stared at the Machine Dragon which was wrapped around her body.

(This is bad—!)

Compared to a general-purpose Machine Dragon, not only is a Divine Drag-Ride's processing degree of difficulty high, and the exhaustion of the user intense, but there was also a more fundamental danger.

It was the fact that it could rampage.

A Drag-Ride operation method broadly divided into two types.

The body armor processing by moving the armor wrapping one's body with the limbs and power condition, and the mind processing done by thought via the Sword Device.

Generally, a skillful use of these two methods would operate a Machine Dragon, but under extreme fatigue

and burden, the user's rhythm would go amiss and the Machine Dragon would act beyond expectations — In other words, the rampage begins.

If he did not settle it quickly, it would become dangerous for both parties.

The moment Lux saw that, he used his <Wyvern>'s maximum output and flew into the air.

"Kuh…!? W-With such a thing…"

Clear agitation and a color of fatigue appeared on Lizsharte's face.

But, she instantly changed her expression.

Lizsharte quickly wielded her Sword Device and injected a new thought.

Legion

The 16 <Airborne fortresses> which were flying around Lux lost their output and fell to the ground.

Cutting of control.

She focused her consciousness and power which were originally distributed to other arms, and chose only one point, channeling all that destructive power.

All that energy was converged into the main armament, the <Seventh Heads>.

“Like I would looooooossssssssse!”

At the same time with an earsplitting scream, <Tiamat > returned under her control.

Lux rose and stabbed his sword and Lizsharte determined the target under her eyes (below).

The two people’s fight reached the climax. At that moment—,

An incident, which should have never occurred, occurred.

Guuuaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!

“…!? This sound is—!”

Vertically piercing through the clouds, the scream of a beast descended.

From high up in the sky above the practice field, an inhuman intruder interfered.

Episode 4 – Assault, and…

Part 1

It is not just against a fellow Drag-Knight that a Drag-Knight should look out for as an enemy.

No, more importantly, humanity's natural enemy to which they must be very careful of, entered this world just now.

It is a mysterious mythical beast which has come to appear occasionally from the ruins where the Drag-Rides were discovered about ten years ago.

There exists countless species and it was said that they would indiscriminately attack humans and animals once they come across them.

What separated them from common beasts were their strength, their mysterious mode of life and their unique abilities.

Therefore, the majority of powerful nations placed forts, barriers and fort cities near the several ruins, and deployed Drag-Knights in preparation for unexpected circumstances.

Even those fort Cities, located between the capital and the ruins, were cities catered to defensive positions.

But—,

“Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!?”

“W-Why is an Abyss suddenly appearing in a place like this—?!”

“Is that…, a Gargoyle type recorded in the books!? Why didn’t the alarm ring!?”

“Everyone, calm down! Lower-class students, do not draw your Sword Devices! Gather without panicking and take shelter in the school building!”

Screams rose one after another from the female students in the audience seats.

Besides Officer Candidate Drag-Knights, there were very few students who had combat experience.

Though the appearance rate of an Abyss is quite low, they are basically several times stronger than Drag-Knights.

Furthermore, since they originally flew from the ruins, which were dozens of kilometers away from the Fort City, a notification of its appearance would generally come from the forts or barriers.

In addition, if it happened that Drag-Rides were deployed in crowded areas like the audience seats, it was a foregone conclusion that the deployment would be delayed by the summons.

When suddenly coming across a wild beast in a downtown, one could not have time to leisurely load bullets in a gun in front of the beast.

Even the eight student Drag-Knights who were deployed to stretch the barrier of the audience seats were completely petrified in face of this sudden occurrence.

"What on earth happened…?"

A female instructor, Raigree stared at the sky while gathering the students and put her hand on the Sword Device to her waist.

The habits of an Abyss are quite similar to that of a carnivore.

The tendency of counterattacking what attacks it first or running after a prey trying to run away was a typical behavior that belonged to these monsters.

If someone were to make a careless move from the ground, the Abyss which was in the sky would react and might start to attack the audience seats below.

Therefore, Raigree hesitated in her decision.

But, at that time—,

Guaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!

The mechanical type Abyss with a winged person shape, the Gargoyle howled.

At the same time, from a part of both its wings which were spread apart, it scattered feather type light bullets.

The shooting direction was below.

In other words, the audience seat — in this practice field.

"…!?"

At that moment when instructors and students held their breath.

Lux Acadia sliced the Gargoyle in the sky.

Part 2

"What…!?"

The moment when Lizsharte had her attention attracted by the Gargoyle high in the sky, Lux Acadia accelerated further.

He sharply raised his partially destroyed blade in a posture to thrust it upward.

He passed across Lizsharte and further closed in upon the Gargoyle in the sky.

"Guaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

Immediately after, from both wings of the Gargoyle, feather-type light bullets were released directly under.

But,

"Drag-Ride ROAR (Howling Roar)!"

On the front of Lux Acadia's <Wyvern>, a spiral shock wave was developed (unfolded).

It was a Drag-Knight's basic technique which flipped the enemy throwing attack by means of a shock wave generated from the Force Core.

The attack's trajectory was deflected by it and the light bullets poured down not on the practice field, but over the surrounding vacant landscape.

Bang……!

A moment later, a roaring sound and a shock wave burst in succession.

The blast wind blew down trees, stirring up violent sandstorms.

From the audience seats, female students' screams could be heard.

"What is the meaning of this!? Why did the Abyss suddenly appear—"

As Lizsharte, greatly shaken, was going to set up the <Seven-Headed Dragon (Seventh Heads)> of her <Tiamat>,

『—Lizsharte-sama

Lizsharte could hear Lux Acadia's voice directly within her head.

It was the communication ability between fellow Drag-Rides — dragon voice.

While sending his voice, Lux Acadia blocked the Gargoyle's way.

"—Shaaaaaaaaaah!"

Long and slender arms, and claws which shone purple .

Lux Acadia parried high-speed consecutive blows drawn out from there with his partially destroyed blade.

『With my <Wyvern>'s fire power, I cannot destroy the Abyss. So, please, go down to the ring on the ground and aim at the enemy.

『Do you intend to order me around? To begin with, can you hold back the Abyss all by yourself—

『I will somehow manage. The signal of the bombardment will be immediately after I brandished my sword.

『H-Hey! Wait a minute!? Lux Acadia!

- beep*, he selfishly cut off the dragon voice's communication, and Lizsharte gritted her teeth.

But, the fact was that, due to <Tiamat>'s extreme consumption, her operation limit was approaching.

Certainly, there was only enough spare energy to release one more shot at the maximum output.

Lux Acadia's judgment was correct.

However—,

"Is he crazy!? Even a kingdom army's Drag-Knight alone can't do anything—"

When Lizsharte, who went down to the ring on the ground, looked up at the sky, she saw this scene.

Part 3

Shortly after the Gargoyle scattered the feather-type light bullets, triggering numerous explosions.

The audience seats and its surroundings were wrapped in panic and confusion.

“Hey, hasn't the permission for drawing swords been issued yet!? W-We must either run away quickly or fight __”

“Backup hasn’t yet come!? What are the guards doing!?”

“W-Why did the third year students have to go for practice at a time like this…”

“Everyone, listen carefully! All students armed with a sword, draw your sword! Deploy a barrier with 70% of power overhead and help students without swords to

block attacks! We will dispose of the enemy! Don't make a move on the Abyss now!"

In an actual combat situation held just before their eyes for the first time, the instructor scolded the confused female students.

While looking at it from afar, the three girls of the Triad and Airi gathered.

Since Airi had a weak body, she applied as a civil official; thus, she possessed neither Sword Device nor Drag-Ride.

Therefore, so as to protect her, the three girls wore Drag-Rides on their bodies and set up a barrier overhead.

"Good grief, they are still knight candidates after all, so they are vulnerable to a sudden disturbance."

Airi sighed while surveying her surroundings.

Nokuto who saw it nodded slightly,

"Yes. —But, you can't blame them. In the case of a fight against Abyss with a general-purpose Drag-Ride, it would require at least three high-class or seven

middle-class renowned users. It's said that in the case of low-class users, a battle only for withdrawal or base defense is possible with about ten renowned users. What's more, in this situation when we were caught off guard––"

"Certainly it is."

The dignified blue-haired girl, Sharis looked around and agreed.

"It was also the right decision to order the standby and defense to the students who can fight. The students who were shaken after seeing the Abyss's strength will become useless. A soldier who has once been corroded by fear must not participate in the battle then. It's what my father once said."

"More importantly, Lux Acadia-kun. Will he be all right?"

To Tillfarr who whispered nervously, Sharis also nodded.

"The "Weakest Undefeated"… He seems to be really good at defense, but, it's useless against an Abyss. If other instructors don't come quickly—"

"It looks like there is only one enemy, eh."

To Sharis' voice tinged with tension, Airi looked up at the sky and muttered.

"Then, he won't lose. If it's Nii-san—"

Part 4

"Guaaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

In the sky of the practice field, light was dancing.

The Gargoyle drew out claws at high speed from both arms, and Lux Acadia flipped and parried them with his blade.

Not only did he perfectly prevent one by one the consecutive blows drawn out with a momentum as not to let one breath, the power of each blow was enough to creak each time the receiving armor.

On top of when he lost his balance by the shock, he struck them regardless.

Chasing Lux Acadia who reduced the distance and drawing the trajectory of an arc, the Gargoyle gave pursuit.

The black of the Abyss and the blue of the <Wyvern>.

The traces of the two colors intersected on countless occasions in mid-air and intense sparks scattered.

"…!"

But, while overwhelmed to the extent that his armor was cut down little by little, Lux Acadia's mind was not confused.

He could assume only minimal evasive action.

If he was to take a too large distance, the Gargoyle might change its target of attack.

To the audience seats where there was his younger sister Airi and — the powerless students without Drag-Rides directly below.

Thus, it was in a situation where even his defense options were restricted.

However,

(It was about time to see through its intentions, huh)

The ability which could be called the essence of Lux Acadia suddenly broke its equilibrium.

The life-or-death crisis which he had got over on countless occasions.

The Drag-Ride's armor which he was familiar with to the extent that it was mistaken as a part of his body.

His body moved even beyond thinking and reflexes.

At this moment — Lux Acadia's scenario was completed.

By a hairbreadth, he slipped through the alloyed claws drawn out and casually stabbed his blade to the Gargoyle's chest in perfect timing.

"Guih…!?"

To the sudden counterattack of Lux who had been devoting himself into a one-sided defensive battle, the Gargoyle showed agitation for the first time.

On its hard body, a wound of a finger size.

That was only it, but the Gargoyle's mechanical expression turned harsh.

Lux Acadia's combat experience was not only that of the tournament of the capital.

There were also many times where he handled jobs of the defense of ruins and fought against Abysses.

Among the frightened female students of the audience seats on the ground, Lux Acadia's ears also heard that a big stir occurred.

"Guaaaaaaah!"

The Gargoyle's movement stopped for a moment and it raised a cloudy roar.

It could not be determined whether it recognized Lux as a powerful enemy as it was an opponent that could not speak, but Lux suddenly braced himself.

The Gargoyle belonged to the species with high intelligence even among the Abysses.

It was said that not only does it launch a surprise attack like a wild beast, but it also knows how to use a tactical level retreat.

『Lux Acadia! Reinforcements are coming! They are preparing for the siege! Wait only a little more!

A communication by dragon voice came from the instructor Raigree on the practice field.

“Guaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

When Lux, just for an instant, focused his consciousness on the communication, the Gargoyle kicked the sky and charged.

“……!”

Lux reflectively set up his blade.

But, the Gargoyle passed through Lux’s side and nose dived to the practice field directly below.

At the same time, it greatly spread its jet black wings which wore a purple light.

The omen of the bombardment which it showed first.

The aim was—, the audience seats!

While moving to take shelter, the female students who were watching the development of the fight slightly gasped as they were taken aback.

"____!"

Lux switched his <Wyvern>'s propulsion output to maximum and pursued the Gargoyle.

Catching up with its back, Lux brandished his blade overhead. At that time,

"Guaaaah!"

The Gargoyle suddenly stopped its attack and turned around in the air.

"…!?"

The Gargoyle kind was an Abyss with high intelligence.

During the brief offense and defense, he grasped Lux's ability and saw through his intention of fighting.

Lux's action purpose — was to move in order to protect the students of the audience seats.

The Gargoyle which recognized that pretended to aim at the students and lured Lux.

"Kuh…!?"

Lux's slash packed with all his energy fruitlessly cut the sky.

Lux Acadia became wide open in front of the Gargoyle .

"Shaaaaaaaaa–"

From below to above, a flash of claws.

It pierced the barrier and flew off the armor covering Lux Acadia's shoulders.

In the sky of the practice field, a spray of fresh blood danced.

"Ku, ah…!"

The <Wyvern>'s system shut down and Lux Acadia started a free fall.

But at that moment—,

"…I see. I understood."

Lizsharte's smile was reflected in the eyes of Lux Acadia who turned his face.

"If you give an opportunity to someone with a solid defense, you will bring him down even if he applies all his energy—. It is certainly a standard strategy, monster. I'm the same, too."

"—Gi!?"

The Gargoyle's agitation was drowned out by a very large flash of light.

<Seven-Headed Dragon>.
Seventh Heads

The strongest main armament that the Divine Drag-Ride<Tiamat> which Lizsharte drives, possessed.

The light pillar of the seven lines released from the muzzle pierced the Gargoyle's strong metal body and pulverized it.

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!

Spreading an echo of death agony, the Gargoyle burst and scattered.

Lux Acadia fell inside where black metal debris was pouring down with a clattering sound.

To the peace which returned after the beast's defeat, cheers of relief rose from the female students who had taken shelter.

"However, what a man… you are."

Lizsharte who caught Lux Acadia cancelled <Tiamat>' s connection and laughed.

How many humans were there in this place that understood of the fearful Lux Acadia with the current offense and defense?

『—the signal for the bombardment will be after I raise my sword.

The first words which he said with the dragon voice's communication.

In other words, that bargaining itself where it was thought that the Gargoyle outwitted Lux Acadia was the scenario which Lux Acadia had drawn up completely.

Even the fact that he applied an attack on the enemy and attracted his attention to him (Lux) by making him think "this guy is dangerous".

Even his fighting action in order to protect the audience seats below was also included.

Everything was to drive in a blow with all his might and to make Lizsharte attacked at that opportunity—

"However — you're a fool after all."

With a pure smile cleared of all malice, Lizsharte looked up at the sky.

And, towards the students who could not settle their great joys and excitement, Lizsharte inhaled.

"Listen! Everyone who is in this place! I, the New Kingdom Princess, I have something important to announce!"

Lux Acadia's fatigue and stamina was already beyond their limits.

"……"

The wound on his chest did not seem to be that serious .

Airi, the other students and Lizsharte were safe, too.

(It somehow went well, I guess…?)

After ascertaining only that, Lux Acadia finally lost consciousness.

Part 5

After a mock battle, taking a bath was Lizsharte's daily routine.

Her fighting spirit was highly strung after a battle.

Of course, she could not boil the water for the whole large public bath in the evening, so she only drew hot water for herself alone in a bucket and only washed off her sweat lightly in the washing area.

It was not unnecessary; however, warm water drops ran down over the skin of the young girl with some ups and downs.

"Phew…"

As she lightly sprinkle hot water on her whole body, Lizsharte's face flushed and she leaked a long sigh.

Elation just after a battle and the feeling of satisfaction of the victory.

The girl had many times tasted such things until now.

(But—, what is it? This feeling…)

However, today's feeling was different from any of that.

"To think that there was a man of the same generation that could put up such a fight against me… Besides—"

She thought that this was the first time.

(A man who also tried to help and protect me…)

That time when the Abyss had assaulted, Lux Acadia turned his back to the enemy and protected her who had not enough remaining power; and he engaged the enemy without hesitation.

(This was the first time. That I thought I "lost"…)

The New Kingdom was established and for Lizsharte who became its Princess, she had thought that the "man" who was the symbol of the Old Empire was her enemy, or an existence which was at best a stepping stone.

Even from her father who planned the coup d'état to overthrow the Old Empire, she had never felt affection.

She had never once held something like romantic feelings.

But—.

(It might have been fortunate that this has been seen by that guy.)

While touching her lower abdomen, just below her navel with her fingertip, Lizsharte felt anxious.

Even though it was secret which must not be known, the fact that she thought that she was glad now was strange.

The girl wiped her body with a towel soaked with hot water.

“Hmm, phew…”

When her hand casually touched her chest, *badump*. She felt such a sweet throbbing.

“Lux Acadia… huh”

The girl's shapely lips naturally smiled when she muttered that.

"There is also a reliable guy even among the men, huh …"

With these words, Lizsharte noticed her feelings.

That for the first time, she had found what she wanted in a "person".

Part 6

He had a dream.

Six years ago. One year before the coup d'état occurred , the scene when Lux Acadia headed to the Imperial Court.

The world's largest country, the Acadia Empire.

A detached mansion of the royal palace in the Imperial capital.

In the courtyard where greenery overflowed, Lux Acadia was looking up at the sky.

"Even though you didn't come to the imperial capital for a long time, that's a fairly long face. Dear little brother ."

A silver-haired young man who was standing with his back leaned on a marble pillar—, the First Prince Fugil smiled wryly.

He was Lux Acadia's eldest brother born of a different mother, but he had already retired from the front line because injury and disease due to an accident.

Thus, he had a really close relationship with Lux Acadia who had similarly been expelled from the Imperial Court due to circumstances.

"Was I wrong?"

As his gaze fell to the water's surface of the pond, Lux Acadia muttered.

The expression of the youth who wore the imperial family's mantle on his body was cold and stiff.

"No, you did well."

Fugil answered in a calm tone.

"The Honor of being the youngest in the empire history to have obtained the license of Drag-Knight. Using the opportunity of having been invited into the Imperial Court for that commendation, your ability to report to Father — to His Majesty the Emperor was splendid. It was hardly thinkable of you who have just turned 12."

The Reinforcement law of the system of androcracy. The heavy taxation due to military expansion. Human experiment of powerful drugs using poor citizens.

Lux Acadia had carried out the statement of wanting you (the emperor) to cancel all of that.

"But, His Majesty the Emperor didn't even take the trouble to hear you out. Your doubt is also justifiable. This empire has completely accelerated (grown) in the wrong direction."

"……"

Even to his eldest brother, Fugil who held the same opinion, Lux Acadia did not change his complexion.

To his younger brother who showed neither resentment nor disappointment even after he was deprived of his greatest chance, Fugil continued his words.

"It seems to have been decided that your little sister will also go to the remote region in two months. Poor child, even though she still bedridden due to illness after losing her mother in that incident…"

"……"

"I wonder whether it was to boost the morale of the army of frontier guards as well as a diplomatic purpose. His Majesty's way of doing is candid. Once you oppose him, he will show no mercy even to his relatives."

"What do you think, Nii-san? About the situation of this Empire."

Lux Acadia turned his face to Fugil and asked.

It was not the expression of a pretty boy where childishness remained; it was a different look.

It was an inhuman ruler's smile.

It was the transcendent smile of a person who cleared away ethics and emotions.

"The Empire now is smeared with depravity. Corruption, disparity, tyranny, heavy taxes and oppression. The gear which once went amiss accelerates without stopping. His Majesty the Emperor and the ministers did not even listen to my report."

Lux Acadia spun his words with a calm tone.

"—Despite this, no one tries to stop it. No one tries to correct it. Let alone the people of lineage that hold authority, even the other chief vassals and feudal lords."

"…You're right."

To that fact which was indifferently spitted out, Fugil agreed.

"He neither takes the populace's life into consideration nor corrects injustice; he doesn't carry out his duty, either . Nobles, who only steal, force and covet. They have certainly lost the pride of "Standing above others". Even their subordinates and dependents are so. The current nobles themselves should know their depravity. However, once he turns to the side which exploited — to the side which receives benefit, he will never consider going as far as to cast away his profits and position in order to save the people. He can permit as many times as he likes the "irrational misfortune of others"."

"……"

After Lux Acadia slightly nodded to Fugil's words,

"Yes… That's why this empire — the world doesn't change anymore. It can't be changed. As long as the empire's army monopolizes the Drag-Rides, revolt will only be the final coating of tragedy. I've heard about many stories of resistance and even uncalled massive slaughters."

"Yes. But, there is nothing we can do now—"

"—No, I don't think so."

Interrupting the words of Fugil who resigned himself, Lux Acadia said clearly.

"So, there is something I have to tell you. Will you hear it? It's for that reason that I come today to the imperial capital."

Lux Acadia's smile which wore a shadow and Fugil with a perplexed face.

That scene became dim and disappeared.

And Lux Acadia regained his consciousness.

Part 7

"Hmm…"

The setting sun burning madder red came in through the window.

A small wooden private room which smelled of medicine and flowers.

Lux Acadia woke up on the bed of the room.

A bandage was wound to his chest which was cut. It looked like the wound was shallow.

“This place is—?”

“Ah… D-Did you wake up!?”

“Uwah…!?”

Hearing a voice nearby, Lux Acadia, startled, sprang up.

A blond-haired girl, the Scarlet Princess Lizsharte was sitting on a chair immediately nearby, watching over him .

It looked like this place was the academy’s medical office.

“D-Does your wound hurt? U-Um, the skill of the doctor here should be pretty good, but—”

With a somewhat settled appearance, Lizsharte looked into Lux Acadia’s face.

She seemed to be extremely worried about him.

"……"

After grasping the situation, Lux Acadia looked downward for a while,

"Um—, thank you."

He said so with a smile.

"Eh…?"

Lizsharte cocked her head in puzzlement and looked at Lux Acadia

"For having taken care of someone like me—"

"……"

For a little while, Lizsharte blinked her eyes as she was taken by surprise—,

"Lux Acadia. You're a guy whom I don't know whether you're modest or arrogant. Was everyone in the royal family of the empire like that?"

"I don't know. I have been immediately driven out of the imperial court when I was child."

As Lux Acadia smiled wryly, Lizsharte muttered in a low voice “I see”.

“D-Does that have anything to do with your heading towards the Abyss without hesitation?”

She continued so in a slightly awkward tone.

“Eh?”

“An ordinary human can’t do it and wouldn’t. Facing an Abyss with a general-purpose Drag-Ride is… Why did you save me—?”

Showing a somewhat shy aspect, Lizsharte asked.

“…E-Errr, I don’t remember well.”

Lux Acadia honestly answered while smiling wryly.

“However, I just think that I have to do it. I’m often scolded by my little sister. “Nii-san does right away what he thinks” she says.”

When he said that troubled, after Lizsharte folded her arms and showed a thoughtful look,

"I see. Well, it's fine. It's my principle not to think about bothersome things after all. You protected me — us. I will leave it only at that."

"You're a quite frank person, eh. Princess."

As Lux Acadia said with an awkward smile,

"Yes, that's right. I'm a very lenient and generous Princess to those who are competent."

Lizsharte happily returned a lovely smile.

The caution and hostility which she had towards Lux Acadia until very recently seemed to have completely disappeared.

Rather than childish, her pure and honest attitude was refreshing.

"Yes. You might be a very useful guy, fallen Prince."

As Lux Acadia breathed a sigh of relief to the princess who slightly blushed and nodded,

"Okay, Lux Acadia. I will believe you completely. So, I will fulfill my promise."

Lizsharte suddenly stood up and said such a thing.

"A promise?"

"I-I said it, didn't I? The reason why I challenge you to a duel. Since you had seen that, I couldn't let you off like that. S-So—"

"Ah. U-Um — sorry, I saw everything… But, it was beautiful."

"D-Don't remember it, stupid Prince! What I want to talk about is—"

As a towel was thrown out by Lizsharte who turned red, Lux Acadia blocked his view.

Have I said something rude?

As usual, I don't really know how to interact with girls.

As Lux Acadia thought so and took the towel in front of him—,

"U-Um—, it's this."

An unbelievable sight spread before his eyes.

In the evening sun coming in through the window, Lizsharte's skin could be seen.

She rolled up the uniform blouse until above, grated her skin, lowered her underwear only just a little and stripped off.

As if saying that "I wanted you to see".

The cheeks of Lizsharte who averted her eyes turned red not only because of the setting sun but also because shyness.

"…It's like that. This is the real reason why I challenge to a duel. You have seen this in the bathroom at that time , so—"

"……"

The girl's fresh rotundity which showed signs of clear growth on her figure where childishness remained.

Lux Acadia was completely captivated by that immature beauty.

"W-Why don't you say anything!? How about you say something?"

"…! U-Um, errr—"

While completely forgetting himself, Lux Acadia thought.

That's right. I will use the art of talking that I learned in the bar where I did odd jobs at that time.

When you praise a girl, you should first praise the affinity of the person herself with cloths—

"Um, it suits you very well. That white underwear—"

"Uwaaaaaaaah!? Are you idiot!? Pervert! Die!"

I failed again! Let's forget already the knowledge I acquired when I worked there…

While Lux Acadia was regretting, Lizsharte who spouted fire from her face hurriedly raised her skirt.

But, everything else was fairly visible to Lux Acadia.

“Is that crest… possibly — the Old Empire’s?”

“…D-Did you finally noticed? —So that means, you haven’t told anybody about this, right?”

As Lux Acadia nodded, Lizsharte who put back her clothes sat on the chair.

The Old Empire’s crest which modeled a black dragon.

That brand was in the lower abdomen under the navel of Lizsharte.

“Why in the world—”

“I can’t tell it yet. But, don’t speak about this crest to anyone. Please. Will you promise?”

“……”

The body of the New Kingdom Princess has the mark of the Old Empire.

It was either the proof of betrayal or the false statement of lineage.

Certainly, if it was known, it was a fact that might cause groundless doubt, but Lux Acadia, even before the doubt, was concerned about Lizsharte.

Lizsharte who kept quiet and looked downward, desperation was transmitted.

It was not “I want you to overlook it”… but rather “I want you to believe in me”.

Right, he felt like she was saying it in her heart.

Surely — it was not a guilty, simple secret.

Even Lux Acadia himself had such a past.

That’s why he understood.

This child had probably not done anything bad.

“It’s all right. I won’t tell anybody.”

“Really? Can you swear it?”

"Yes. I swear on the Sword Device I possess."

Lux Acadia straightened himself and bowed his head.

Lizsharte who saw it leaked a breath of relief and showed a smile.

"Thanks god. At first, I intended to interrogate you in various ways after I confined you in the underground prison by that duel, but—"

"Eh… Eeeeeeeeeeeeh!?"

So, you intended to confine and interrogate me after beating me into a pulp and sending me to the medical office!

As expected, it isn't the way of thinking of a Princess.

She's pretty rough, this child…

"Okay. Then, this matter is settled. With that said, I will have you officially come to this academy from tomorrow."

"Ah, there was such an agreement. From the start—"

The duty of Drag-Ride mechanic apprentice requested by the Principal Relie.

Many things had happened, but he finally returned to his original odd jobs.

When Lux Acadia was relieved so,

"Ah. By the way, the work of mechanic apprentice was cancelled. From tomorrow on, you will come as a officer candidate student to our academy."

"Ah, yes. Understood."

Several seconds after giving a half-hearted reply, Lux Acadia reflected on that meaning,

"—Wait, eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeh!?"

He instinctively screamed.

"I-It's a joke, right…? I mean, in the first place, I'm a man—"

"A-And, call me "Lisha" like my classmates. This is a promise, too."

It looked like she was completely serious.

Seeing Lisha's bashful smile, he felt like the wound on his chest got severely worse.

Episode 5 - Reunion with a Childhood Friend

Part 1

"—With that said, he is Lux Acadia who will be attending this school from today. Everyone, there are probably many things which you aren't used to, but I hope you will get along with him."

The next day —.

The school building: second floor, second year's classroom morning.

Receiving the introduction of the female instructor in charge of the class Raigree Balheart, Lux made an expression showing that he did not know what to say.

Raigree, while being a woman, played an active role as a Drag-Knight in the Old Empire Era, and she also took the New Kingdom side as the ally of women in the coup d'état.

In addition, including her beauty and dignified personality, she seemed to boast of great popularity among the female students.

It might have been some sort of fortune that he was put in the class which such an instructor took charge of.

That's — if Lux was a female student officer candidate though.

"……"

Last night, since there was no vacant room in the girl's dormitory, Lux ended up staying at the drawing room for visitors and spent a night where he was not able to sleep very good.

However, it was because of that Lux's stomach hurt.

After the New Kingdom establishment by coup d'état, Lux who was working as a chore Prince was used to busy and hard work.

What was the most toilsome was that when seeing the classroom, he was strongly feeling out-of-place.

It's impossible.

Even more than Lisha's coerciveness, as "a test entrance which considers a future coeducation", and frankly speaking, he did not know at all about what

Principal Relie who also permitted it, though it was a temporary enrollment was thinking.

(How can she easily permit it even though it's a girl's academy…?)

Lux knew that Relie had such a character from a long time, but as expected, she had too much freedom.

By the way, since it seemed that a substitute capable person would be arranged by the Kingdom to do the other miscellaneous jobs, which Lux was scheduled to do , he was relieved for the time being.

"Errr, I'm Lux Acadia. I hope to get along with you…"

For the time being, he made an awkward greeting.

By the way, Lisha who was in the same class, probably due to yesterday's fatigue, far from offering a lifeboat to Lux was sleepily rowing the boat.

Small buzzing and whispering voices filled the classroom.

Well, it's no wonder.

He was a Prince of the Old Empire which laid out the trend of androcracy for many years, so although the system changed five years ago, it was still the object of caution for girls.

Moreover, that a person like him was the only one admitted in a young ladies' academy—

(Haa…, I want to go home.)

Everyone probably hates it, too, and honestly even I don't know what to talk about—

"…Ah. It's Lu-chan."

As Lux was inwardly shedding tears, he suddenly heard such a voice.

"—Eh?"

A pink-haired girl who was in a seat on the window side of the classroom.

Her fluffy hair was brought together with two ribbons, which properly suited the girl's absentminded atmosphere.

And, her rich chest which greatly pushed up her uniform brought about a mysterious charm to the girl's face where traces of childishness remained.

"Long time no see."

In a soft voice, the girl smiled at Lux.

Her slow way of talking and peculiar atmosphere rang a bell to Lux.

"Errr, are you by any chance, Philphie…?"

"Yes, that's right."

To Lux's question, the girl nodded and confirmed.

Philphie Aingram.

She was the second daughter of the great mercantile House, the Aingram Financial Conglomerate, and also Lux's childhood friend.

Furthermore, she was the Principal — Relie Aingram's younger sister.

It had actually been seven years since the last time they met.

At that time, the Aingram House was associated with the Old Empire and there was also the fact that they were the same age, so Lux remembered that they played a lot together when they were children.

"So you are attending this school. I'm glad. Please, take care of me, Lu-chan."

With a tone which did not seemed that much happy, Philphie said.

Though, Lux knew that Philphie was originally a girl who was not very good in expressing her emotions.

And, the fact that she was not so talkative and also that she had an honest personality.

Therefore, even though she looked like this, she was probably really happy.

"Ah, yes. Likewise, take care of me."

As Lux exchanged greetings like this, the instructor Raigree pointed and said "okay, Lux. Your seat is next to that child."

Lux was nervous, but as he sat down next to his childhood friend, he took a breath of relief for the first time.

Thank god.

Even if was a few, there was a friend whom he could speak with.

While Lux who was tired in various ways since yesterday loosened his cheek in relief, he looked at his childhood friend sitting nearby—

(But, we are in an age and position different from those seven years ago, we're in a classroom, so I should take that into consideration a little, shouldn't I?)

"Um, would it be better that I call you Philphie-san?"

The moment Lux said so, suddenly (in a bad mood) Philphie turned away with a serious look.

"Eh…?"

Lux was perplexed to that reaction.

Did I say something rude?

(But, I have memory that it was rare that Philphie got angry about something, but—)

"It's Phi-chan, isn't it?"

As Lux thought so, Philphie said that while still looking away.

"…Eh? Can I call you like that here!?"

"……"

Philphie affirmed as she nodded.

(N-Now that I think about it…!)

Lux remembered with cold sweat.

Philphie had since olden days demanded a relationship where she and someone whom she took a liking to called each other by their nickname.

Lux was also doing so since they were very close when they were children, but—

"I-I'm happy you say that, but as expected, I can't call you that here… I mean look, we have already grown up,

also we're officer candidates, and we're in the academy…
"

Or should I say, it was very embarrassing to call you so in front of unknown classmates.

"Would you consider the situation at that angle?" Lux expected so, but—

"……"

Hmph.

Looking at Lux who made excuses, Philphie looked away once again.

The noisy stir of the classmates could be heard.

"Everyone, don't make noise. I'm starting the lesson."

With Raigree's voice, the classroom regained calm instantly.

But, since it was a sudden admission, Lux had not yet have a textbook at hand.

"Philphie-san. Can I use your textbook together with you?"

"……"

He was ignored.

"Ph-Philphie. T-This much is all right, right? H-Hey, we're in class now…"

"……"

There was no reaction.

I soon wanted to cry.

"…Hey, Phi-CHAN."

"What…? Lu-chan."

As Lux somehow squeezed his voice, Philphie turned towards him and said so.

"M-May we read your textbook together…?"

"Yes, all right." At that moment, laughter leaked from all over the classroom.

"Cute" "Phi-chan he says" "Did those two have that kind of relation?"

Hearing many such voices, Lux's face turned red.

Ha, it's too embarrassing…!

What is this!?

What kind of situation is this!

"Fufufufu…!"

Incidentally, even the serious instructor Raigree was trying to suppress her laughter.

Lux endured the urge of wanting to run away right now and somehow took the class.

"…Hmph"

Lisha who woke up looked at this as she seemed to be in a bad mood.

And, Lux did not notice another female student's gaze

Part 2

However, unexpectedly his embarrassing exchange with Philphie seemed to bear fruit as Lux's classmates seemed to have dispelled their caution towards him.

"Hey, hey, were Philphie-chan and Lux-kun by any chance fiancés?"

"What kind of jobs does the chore Prince usually do?"

"Speaking of which, why can you fight against an Abyss alone? Isn't it great!?"

"Are men that good at using Drag-Rides? I heard that the aptitude rate was originally above for women, but—"

And then, the number of female students assailing with questions and gathering in front of his desk, at every short break during lessons increased like a festival.

The duel with Lisha who was the Princess, and the repulsing of the Abyss.

For good or for bad, the bad impression of having intruded into the bathroom was completely wiped out

and it seemed that only interest and favorable impression towards Lux remained in the students.

Just before the lunch break, a large number of onlookers flocked from other classes.

(Somehow, it's different from what I've imagined…!)

Knight candidates' academy which noble young ladies attended.

As Lux was perplexed to the atmosphere which crumbled too much regarding it—

"Lux-kun. That reminds me, you're still doing the miscellaneous jobs, aren't you?"

"Errr. Yes, well… it's my duty after all."

As he replied so being asked by one of the girls who surrounded his desk,

"So if I ask, Lux-kun will do jobs here. All right, shall I ask at once?"

"Ah, it's not fair. I also wanted to ask!"

"Lux-san. More importantly, would you like to have tea with me?"

"Everyone, if you've any request, I will collect them. If you approach him all at once, Lux-cchi will be troubled, right?"

Tillfarr who was a classmate came over and began to bring everyone together.

(I'm selfishly given a strange nickname…)

It looked like Tillfarr, who was one of the trio — one of the "Triad" which seemed to be famous even in the academy, was the mood maker-like existence even in the class.

"Phew…"

However, honestly, he felt relieved.

It's a good thing if Tillfarr interceded for everyone—

"Yes, yes. Write your odd jobs requests to Lux-cchi and put them in this box. Carry them. Put in also the appointed date. They will be done in turns later."

“Eeeeeeeeeh!?”

(Somehow, the talk has been settled in a bad sense!)

“Don't worry. Everyone is rich after all. Like this, Lux-cchi’s debt can also be paid quickly!”

“……”

As far as he could see the written requests being thrown in the wooden box which Tillfarr prepared to the extent that they overflowed, he felt like he was going to collapse before the completion of requests.

And — it was lunch break; as Lux who was mentally tired laid face down on his desk for a while,

“H-Hey. If it’s fine with you, how about going to eat meal together? Lux.”

“Uwah!?”

Being suddenly called out to from above his head, Lux jumped.

Standing before him was Lisha.

He had the feeling that she had been half sleeping nearby during the lesson, but she seemed to have woken up before he noticed.

"Errr, do you mean — the two of us?"

"T-That's right … Don't you want to go with me?"

While faintly reddening her cheeks, Lisha looked away .

At that moment, a small stir filled the classroom.

"A-And if possible — I would like you to become my exclusive care taker from here on. Coincidentally, I also wanted one servant after all."

As Lisha said so while restlessly twining her finger in front of her chest,

"Eeeh!?"

Along with Lux's scream, the whole class rustled once again.

"Eh? What does she mean?" "If I remember correctly, Lizsharte-sama didn't apply even a maid for her care as

she is misanthropic, right?" "To make him, a 'man' her servant is—" "No way…"

From the female students of the class, he could hear such voices from afar.

"S-Such a thing—"

Since he could not reject it in a loud voice, he was troubled.

"This much is fine, isn't it? At that time, you forcibly saw even my naked body after all—"

At Lisha's words, "kyaaaaaaaaah" high pitch voices rose from the classroom.

As expected, the incident of the bathroom had become a rumor, but there seemed to be students who did not know the details.

"T-That was — um"

As Lux completely panicked—,

"……"

A girl quietly approached Lux.

"…Phi-chan?"

It was Philphie.

While already eating something which looked like baked doughnuts silently probably for lunch break, she stood just beside Lux and Lisha facing each other.

She was expressionless as usual, but she revealed a strong presence.

"*gulp*. Lu-chan is troubled. Lizsharte-sama."

Swallowing the doughnut in her mouth, Philphie said.

"What. I was wondering who it was, but it's just the airhead daughter of the Aingram Financial Conglomerate, huh. It's troublesome. Okay, I'll give you my snacks, so step back calmly."

After knitting her brows only for an instant, Lisha took out paper packages from her bosom and ordered Philphie.

Judging from the faint sweet smell and the package, a golden gloss (luster).

The contents seemed to be bread seasoned with honey.

"……"

It was specified in the school regulations that there was no hierarchical relationship between nobles and that they were treated as equal knight candidates within the academy.

But, that was to the bitter end an official stance, and it was not going on like that in reality.

A Princess was after all a Princess.

"It's not as if Lux himself really asked for help, right? I don't know about you being childhood friends or whatever, but I advise you not to thoughtlessly poke your nose into other people's affairs."

Lisha told so as to persuade her.

Philphie silently gnawed the bread from the package she received like a small animal.

"Ah, so you're eating it…"

Philphie was extremely fond of sweet things. And, she was doing things at her own pace.

She also seemed to have not changed on that side since a long time.

"Everyone would understand just by seeing that Lu-chan is troubled. So stop. Princess."

A slow and loose tone.

But, Philphie told so clearly.

One did not know what Philphie was thinking as she was usually absentminded, she firmly insisted unexpectedly and she was the obstinate type.

The exchanges of the two girls became incandescently calmly.

The classmates of the classroom brightened their eyes to that scene and began to get greatly excited.

"I wonder who will win."

"The New Kingdom Princess and or the childhood friend of the Aingram Financial Conglomerate…"

Lux who became unable to endure being here, hurriedly,

"W-Wait, you two, calm down—"

The moment when he raised his voice,

"—Sorry for meddling as you're busy, but can I?"

A dignified sound.

He heard a translucent voice in the classroom.

Lux remembered the girl with beautiful features like a fairy.

Krulcifer Einvolk.

She was a fellow knight candidate classmate who was a foreign student from the religious country Ymir, a powerful nation in the north.

It was that girl who made the escaping Lux swoon; flinging him away in the incident of the day before yesterday.

"Krulcifer, huh. If you have business, leave it for later. I'm in the middle of an important talk now—"

Lisha swelled her cheeks (as if pouting) and protested so, but

"I was asked for a little business from the Principal of the school. There is a place that she wants me to guide that child to at lunch break. Understood, Lux-kun?"

"Errr…, ah, yes."

It was the first time he heard about the matter of being guided, but thinking that it was a lifeboat, Lux rode on the talk.

"Then, it's like that, so."

As Krulcifer told so and softly held Lux's hand, she pulled him to the corridor without waiting for Lisha's and Philphie's reply.

"—No way, to think even that talented Krulcifer-san is interested in him"

"It has become interesting."

To his classmates' shrill voices which he could hear from behind, Lux walked down the corridor while bearing some anxiety.

Part 3

Coming out from the classroom to the corridor, they went up the stairs.

When they arrived at the rooftop where there was no one, Krulcifer approached the handrail and quietly looked down below.

The scenery of the large school site could be overlooked from here.

A vividly green courtyard and great school buildings.

In a slightly remote place, there were the girl's dormitory and the Machine Dragon practice field and the fourth Machine Dragon hangar.

And, there were some buildings which he did not know yet.

"Um, thank you. Krulcifer-san"

For the time being, Lux who took a breather thanked her first.

He had heard rumor about Krulcifer Einvolk only a little from his little sister Airi.

A foreign girl who possessed first-class skill in studying, body techniques, and Drag-Ride's handling.

Including her beauty which exceeded that of an ordinary person, she was a talented woman whos superiority was acknowledged by the people in the academy.

"You helped me… didn't you? Probably."

"Despite your childish face, you're unexpectedly sharp ."

"T-That has nothing to do with it, right!? Why do you say such a thing!? Even though I mind it!"

As Lux unintentionally reddened his face, Krulcifer chuckled.

"The fact that you immediately become irritated like that, despite being a Prince of the Old Empire is what I call childish. Though former, you're also of a royalty, so I wanted you to return such an obvious provocation with sarcasm."

"……"

(It's no good. We should be the same age, and yet she completely has the upper hand.)

When Lux was inwardly snubbed so,

"But, other than it, I praise you. You might say that I admire you. For noticing my intention. It saved me the trouble."

"…Um. Then, as expected, is there something you want to talk to me about?"

"Yes, there several things. But, first of all."

She said so and turned her transparent pupils towards Lux.

"Why didn't you give the finishing blow yesterday — at that time?"

"…Are you talking about Lizsharte-sama? Or about the Abyss…?"

"I think that you could have defeated both though. Only if you felt like it—"

At Krulcifer's glance as she saw through it, Lux hesitated for an instant,

"…You overestimated me too much."

After several seconds, he replied so.

"Certainly, I have never lost in an official mock battle of Drag-Knight. But, I never won, either."

The nickname “Weakest Undefeated” named from the style where he devoted himself entirely to defense and evasion and delivered no attack.

But, as that name showed, all his war records were draws.

Lux had also never won.

“Don’t worry. I don’t intend to force you to speak about something you don’t want to speak about.”

(I-I’m not trusted…!)

As Lux hung his head, Krulcifer said as if reading his thoughts.

“Oh my, there is no way I would trust you, right? You, the peeping tom and underwear thief Prince.”

“L-Like I said! You’re wrong—”

As Lux blushed and became confused, Krulcifer chuckled.

It was a graceful smile hardly thinkable of a girl of the same age.

Lux's heart throbbed for an instant to that expression.

"I'm a little relieved."

"Eh…?"

"It's because you are a more harmless boy than I expected. Your not that much like the Empire's royalty."

"……"

A tone with which he didn't know whether he was praised or made a fool.

But only a little, she seemed to be having fun.

"It can't be helped. After all, I'm the seventh Prince, and moreover—"

"You've a childish face and you're also short?"

"NO!? Um…, for various reasons, we were driven out of the Imperial Court when I was child. So, We're not that much familiar with the Old Empire—"

After the coup d'état succeeded, Lux and Airi were released by the New Kingdom's amnesty.

With the criminal's collar attached to their necks and a large amount of debt as a mark of atonement.

And also another deal—.

"Is that so."

Krulcifer curtly muttered these words without showing any feelings in particular.

"So, Krulcifer-san came abroad to study from the religious country Ymir, to learn about Drag-Knights?"

"Certainly, that's also one of my goals."

How to put it, this girl seemed to always like an elusive way of speaking.

"Then, what kind of other purpose do you have? I heard that you're an Earl's daughter, but is it in order to connect interchanges with the New Kingdom or something like that—"

"…Hey, do you know about the "Black Hero"?"

Interrupting Lux's words, Krulcifer asked.

"Eh…?"

"The monster that destroyed about 1200 of the Empire's Drag-Knights using only an unknown Drag-Knight, and drove the Empire to defeat. Both his affiliation and purpose were unknown. That user's figure hasn't been confirmed in the current New Kingdom. Therefore, he is handed down as a demon of destruction for the Old Empire and as a legendary hero for the New Kingdom."

"…If it's only the rumor, I've heard about him, but—"

"……"

At Lux's answer, Krulcifer said nothing.

She was just overlooking quietly the scenery below in front of the handrail of the rooftop.

"Um…?"

"I have one job request for you."

"Eh?"

"Look for the "Black Hero". I have business with that person."

"…!?"

The moment when Lux unintentionally gasped.

- dong*, the sound of the big bell resounded from the clock tower.

"Ah…"

"The afternoon lesson will soon start. Next is the Practical training exercise for Drag-Rides, so we better hurry up."

While saying only that, Krulcifer got down from the rooftop (you get down from the roof by taking stairs so this sentence doesn't really make sense in my opinion,) and slowly walked to the stairs.

"U-Um… Krulcifer-san!"

When Lux called out to her back, Krulcifer stopped for an instant and turned around.

As Lux was perplexed as he didn't even know what he was going to say,

“Speaking of which, Lux-kun, did you eat lunch?”

“Eh…!?”

(N-Now that she mentioned it, I hadn’t yet!)

It was because he was completely exhausted at the beginning of the lunch break and was rolled up in trouble afterwards—.

The moment he conscious of so, Lux’s stomach growled and his face turned red.

“Do your best. Cute chore Prince.”

Krulcifer suddenly smiled and left just like that.

“……”

Somehow, she was too mysterious a person, but there was only one thing made clear so far.

This person is too tough, in various ways…

Lux held these indescribable feelings and his hunger, and took the afternoon lesson.

Part 4

“Haa, I’m already tireeeeeed…”

Night time.

The large public bath linked to the girl’s dormitory.

While strongly brushing the bathtub and floor where he intruded into the day before yesterday, Lux was exhausted.

After finishing the afternoon class, the number of requests of “odd jobs” which dropped into Lux’s hand had increased.

Was the first ever man to move into this girl's academy ? — the Old Empire’s chore Prince that rare (unusual).

Or, did he attract attention in various ways because of yesterday’s duel and incident?

The requests, including those from the academy and students, exceeded dozens of matters only today, and the number of reservations still kept increasing.

Originally, if Lux had not organized the odd jobs which reached a hard schedule, he might have given up long ago.

“Even so, I think that it’s a place like a paradise though .”

About five years after Lux was released by the amnesty of the New Kingdom.

His life as the chore Prince was by no means comfortable.

Of course, there were also good people at the work place.

But, during the countless requests, there were also many painful and difficult things.

He was awfully cursed (abused) by the people who resented the Old Empire.

Conversely, he had also been spoken ill of as the “dog of the New Kingdom” by the Old Empire’s adherents.

“But—. This place is”

While working hard at studying, he could pay his debt and moreover, his safety was guaranteed.

And above all —daily Drag-Ride training was possible .

It could be said that the fact of the burden of the expensive management, and maintenance fees of his Machine Dragon also disappearing was ideal for the kind of life that Lux aimed for.

However, the only thing which he was concerned about,

“Was it all right for someone like me to stay in such a place?”

In this place where Lux muttered, after a light knock, the door to the dressing room was suddenly opened.

“W-Waaaah!? Sorry! The bath cleaning is already over, can you just wait a little bit now—!?

Damn!?

Have I by any chance forgotten to put the note “under cleaning”?

As Lux raised a voice of explanation in panic—

“I’m sorry for not meeting your expectation, Nii-san. Did you want to see it? My naked body.”

There was his little sister Airi and the Triad’s first-year student who was her friend, Nokuto.

By the way, both of them were properly dressed.

“W- What are you saying!? Ah, Nokuto-san, good evening…”

“Yes. But, it can’t be helped. I hear that adolescent males usually have it tough in various ways. I wonder about how about they lust (crave) for a blood relative, but”

“Why did you assume that I was expecting a naked body!?”

"Well, it's fine though. Shall we, the only family members, enter the bath together next time? Nii-san."

"Airi… It's embarrassing, so could you please not tell such a joke in front of people?"

When Lux's cheeks reddened and he protested, as Airi was also a little embarrassed, she deceived it by clearing her throat *cough*.

"So, do you have business with me? This bath cleaning is already the last for today's requests, so if it isn't a pressing business, I want you to wait a little—"

To Lux who straightened his back, Airi and Nokuto smiled wryly.

"Yes, it's a little work. Afterwards, please come immediately to the grand hall of the girl's dormitory. A detour is out of question (prohibited). Well then, later."

Airi smoothly said and turned her back.

"Understood. I'll go immediately."

"Yes. Please look forward to it."

When bowing to Lux who answered, Nokuto also left the bathroom together with Airi.

"Look forward…?"

Lux cocked his head in puzzlement, but in the end he did not understand.

Part 5

The evening when the sun also went down completely.

After having the housemother who made the request checked the cleaning, Lux headed to the grand hall without break like he was told by Airi and Nokuto.

As he walked in the dormitory, wide like a high-class hotel in the capital, he unintentionally smiled wryly to himself who felt that he was "out of place".

"Speaking of which, I was royalty, too…"

He had lived in the imperial court until 7 years old, but after being deprived of the right of succession to the throne, he lived out of the castle, and it was not that rich (affluent) of a life.

The coup d'état occurred when he was 12 years old, and with a short-term war of about one month, after the Atismata chief officials won, he was imprisoned with his little sister Airi and they were detained for a while.

And—, at the same time as the New Kingdom government was born, Lux became a criminal and it had been decided that he would bear the mission of undertaking odd jobs and a debt with an amnesty.

They were the only two survivors of the Old Empire's royalty.

Although they were almost ousted from the imperial family, to let Lux and his little sister, who had imperial blood live and release them, various agreements were necessary.

Along with another secret which could by no means be said—

"…Errr, was it the grand hall?"

Lux noticed and stopped.

(—But, for what reason would they call me at such a time?)

Even though there are many jobs I can't do when the night comes.

As Lux was thinking so, he saw Airi's figure in the hall which was down the stairs.

"You seem to have straightened your appearance. I've gotten a better opinion of you, Nii-san."

"E-Even I will at least do that much! Um, about the request from the girls—"

"Well then, please come here. Everyone is waiting."

Ignoring Lux's words, Airi took his hand.

Just like that across the passage, to the cafeteria (dining hall).

"Huh…? If I remember correctly, this place is—"

Even though it was already the time when the cafeteria (dining hall) was closed.

As Lux thought so, looking puzzled and entered,

“CONGRATULATIONS FOR YOUR ADMISSION!”

He heard the girls’ voices all at once.

“Eh…?”

When looking at the front, many dishes were placed on a big table.

Meat pie with sauce was put and all sorts of sandwiches with vegetables were put.

Pasta with mushroom dressed with plant oil. Chicken sauté seasoned with spice.

Soup with cooked vegetables, drawing out sweetness.

Even a red wine bottle and teapot were prepared.

“Don’t tell this is—?”

"Right, it's the celebration of your admission. Lux-kun."

Seeing Lux's reaction, Sharis of the Triad lightly smiled.

When looking, the dining hall was set like a small party meeting place, and many students gathered there.

Lizsharte, Krulcifer, Philphie.

Sharis, Tillfarr and Nokuto of the Triad.

And, several students of the same class and also the instructor Raigree also sat in a corner.

For a moment, he could not believe that sight.

It was like a dream.

Lux was absentminded for a little while.

"Um, by any chance — is it for me?"

"…Well, it's something simple we gathered and planned after all. It might be a little plain to entertain you , a former Prince, but please do with it."

As the third-year student Sharis said so,

"Uh-huh. The dishes are everyone's handmade dishes, but don't get your hope up for the taste of what I made! I 'm extremely clumsy after all!"

Said Tillfarr with a face (smile) on her whole face.

"No. I don't think that it's something you should say in this (first) place."

Nokuto threw in a calm response to it.

"Lu-chan. We will be together from now on."

"I'm expecting various things from you."

After Philphie and Krulcifer respectively called out to Lux,

"Yo. Ah, um, how to say it."

Lisha who was sitting on a chair in the back lightly raised her hand and stood up.

"U-Um — frankly speaking, I'm not very good with such a party or event. Therefore, um, I don't really know whether you're happy. But, I thought we should finally do it… Good work… No, it was a great honor on this occasion. Lux Acadia."

While shyly averting her eyes a little, she muttered.

Her attire was a red dress which Lux saw for the first time.

"Yes. Lizsharte-sama seems to want to say "I wanted to thank and congratulate you, and so I planned it. I will be happy if you enjoy it even a little"."

"Y-You're wrong!? Don't translate it on your own! Even though you're just a first year!"

Seeing that exchange, the other students suddenly burst into laughter.

"……"

Because of too much shock, Lux was stiff for a while, but

"—Thank you. Lisha-sama. I'm happy."

He said so with a natural smile.

"N-No… Well, um, how to say it. It's only one, but I also tried and made a dish. Errr…"

- cough*, with a sidelong glance to Lisha who blushed and began to panic, Sharis cleared her throat.

"Well then, shall we already go with the toast?"

To these words, everyone poured wine in their glasses and raised them.

The lively night wore on.

Part 6

The happy time passed in the blink of an eye.

After Lux's welcome party ended and they dispersed.

"What to do… I completely forgot…!"

Because his stomach was full, and there was also the fatigue from the jobs and the moving on the first day, Lux wanted to lie down (and rest) as soon as possible, but he had noticed about this time the fact that an important problem remained.

That was — about the bed (where to sleep).

Lux had been using the drawing room for visitors, but since maintenance was necessary, he just remembered that it was said that it could not be used for a while,

In this academy where there was only the girl's dormitory, the room where Lux would stay has not been yet found.

Therefore, securing a place to sleep was also a problem for Lux, but—

"I wonder why only this place is the same as the time before the move in…"

Even though there were many rooms, there was none where he could stay.

(I should have consulted with the instructor at the party…)

"It's no use. I'm sleepy…"

The collected fatigue and the feeling of a stomach full from a meal.

Without fighting against the sleepiness which suddenly assailed him, he genuflected.

"I will rest a little, so…"

Right, on the hallway carpet, it was right after he leaned on the wall.

Lux's consciousness was immediately swallowed by darkness and he sank into a deep sleep.

Part 7

- cheep* *cheep*…

The chirps of small birds could be heard and on the back of his eyelids, he could feel the warmth of a dim sunlight.

It's morning. Thought Lux within his consciousness.

Have I slept on the corridor? It's a mysterious sensation for it.

(The carpet of this dormitory is warm and soft, huh.)

Besides, it somehow smells really good.

(Until a little while ago, sleeping outdoors or staying in a stable was normal for me after all.)

Remembering such a thing, Lux smiled wryly in a doze.

Before he noticed, he seemed to have gotten used to his fairly poor life.

I should wake up soon; I still have many things to do.

But, I want to stay like this only just a little—

Thinking so, he tried to haul in the blanket in his hand, his eyes closed as it is.

"Ahn…"

- funyu*, along with this soft sensation which touched his hand, he heard such a voice.

"Huh…?"

(I wonder what this is.)

It was fluffy, fleshy, smooth and very soft.

It had elasticity just like kneaded bread dough, and when sank in plumply, Lux's fingers were pushed back.

As that sensation was comfortable and Lux massaged it several time with his eyes still closed—

"A-Ahn…"

"……"

The voice before him turned into a seductive one.

As Lux who was surprised by this opened his eyes—,

"Wha…!?"

A girl with fluffy, light pink hair and golden pupils which thinly opened.

Philphie Aingram was on the same bed — next to Lux.

"Wai…!? Why is Phi-chan here!?"

"…Ah, morning. Lu-chan. Fuhaah."

In contrast with the confused Lux, Philphie winked sleepily.

Her appearance was one thin shirt, an exposed chest and — her underwear could be seen on the lower part of her body.

"Wh… What on earth happened!? Why!? Why are you __"

Lux hurriedly sprang up from the bed and looked around.

Bunk beds, a closet, a small table of two cliffs, a desk—

No matter how you think about it, it was a room for two people of the girl's dormitory.

"…the washroom is on the first floor?"

"Not that!? It's not that I'm worried about!? I mean, cover it! I can see it after all! I can see in various ways!"

While retorting in a fluster, Lux hurriedly covered his eyes with his hands.

As he did so, Philphie yawned in a cute way and crawled once again under the bunk bed (blanket)

"Hey!? Don't sleep again! What's with this situation!? If I remember correctly, last night, I was—"

"Yes. I brought you here. It's because I found you sleeping on the corridor on my way to the toilet… You'd have caught a cold, you know?"

"T-Thank you… Not that!? This room is a room for two girls, right!?"

"I'm the only one using this room, so it's all right."

"Even though there are bunk beds, why did you sleep with me!?"

"It was bothersome to carry you above. And I was sleepy…"

"T-Then, wouldn't it have been better if you have gone to the top, right…?"

"Climbing the ladder was bothersome."

"……"

End of discussion.

"B-But… Um, it's bad after all, right? In a lot of ways—You and I are already at this age."

"I'm all right with it though."

"Ah, geez… How much haven't you changed since a long time ago…!"

No matter how much she is a boxed in young lady, as expected, she is a little too off.

I'm greatly happy that we're close like a long time ago, but the stimulus is stronger now.

Both her appearance and smell let one feel that she was a completely grown-up "girl".

"Did you change, Lu-chan?"

"Eh...?"

Quietly getting up and with a serious look as usual, Philphie said so.

"I think that nothing has changed. I think that you're always the kind Lu-chan of those days."

And just a little bit, she smiled.

A soft smile to the extent that it could only be noticed by someone who had been close to her since a long time.

"It's all right. I'm sure we haven't changed."

"____"

I wonder why.

To Philphie's smile and her words, Lux almost cried (felt like crying).

After all, I am…

On the last day of that coup d'état, I—

- tock* *tock*!

At that time, a sound of knock resounded in the room.

"Philphie! It's already morning. If you don't wake up quickly, you'll be late! You're already late all the time, so if you're late any more than this — may I enter?"

The second-year student of the "Triad", Tillfarr's voice could be heard coming over the door.

"…!?"

(It's bad!)

No matter how much there were circumstances, being seen in this situation would be—

"Philphie…, you know? I'm already up, so can you keep it a secret about me being here—"

"It's fine. Enter."

Before Lux finished saying, Philphie plainly answered.

"Wai—!? Doe this room by any chance not lock with a key!?"

Tillfarr opened the door and entered.

"—Huh?"

And, after absentmindedly opening her mouth as she saw Lux and Philphie,

"……"

- patan*

"Sorry for the intrusion!"

"HEY!? You're wrong! So, please don't spread that story!"

Lux hurriedly came out of the room and ran after Tillfarr who ran away.

In the end, Lux, Philphie and Tillfarr became late while getting along well.

Episode 6 - Atelier of Machine Dragons and Enrolment Exams

Part 1

Castle town of the Imperial Capital. In the drawing room of a small mansion in the outskirts, Lux and a guest were sitting.

Five Years Ago, April.

The feudal lord of the North East from the Imperial Capital, Count Atismata gathered the resistance of every place and raised an uprising 20 days later.

Coupled with the support of neighboring countries, he was ready to lead an army of 70000 soldiers and 207 Drag-Knights and decided to invade the Imperial Capital .

To convey this very important and highly classified information, Fugil came.

It was exactly ten days before his little sister Airi was to head to the Frontier Count.

Fugil, who tightly wrapped himself in a robe from head to toe, sat on a seat at the table illuminated by a candle flame, and slightly stuck out his head.

"The matter is proceeding as planned, little brother. As you planned, everything is going well."

"Thank you."

Lux bowed and then put the Sword Device which he was wearing on the table.

"I'm also ready."

"As expected of you, little brother."

Fugil who heard that nodded with admiration.

"You've far exceeded my expectations. Being the youngest user in the history, you displayed your ability by gaining several hundred victories in the training and mock battles of the Empire army. Originally, that unprecedented exploit is something which should be praised all over the country and also by the Emperor — but this Empire ended up being corrupted to the root."

In a voice mixed with resignation, he continued further.

“You’re the illegitimate seventh Prince. Moreover, you ’re a person who objected to the politics of the Empire. No matter how much skill you have — even if you are praised for your achievements, you hold a differing opinion which doesn't garner attention towards blood legitimacy. This means that such a person can’t be a “ Hero”.”

“I’ve never thought to set myself up as a hero. Just—”

“I know.”

To the answer of the calm Lux, Fugil smiled.

“But, I'll ask you once again, shouldn’t you stop that way of fighting? You don’t expressly have to put yourself in danger in order to save the enemy. If you feel like it, though there will be sacrifices, you can choose a safer way—”

Not even shaken by the voice of Fugil who invited him , Lux raised his face.

"This way, even supposing that the plan succeeds, there will be no meaning."

"Most men of the army are puppets of the imperial family. While wielding the absolute weapon which is the Drag-Ride, they would blindly obey orders of oppression and massacring of innocent people. So, you can't assert that they have no responsibility."

"But, they might just be forced to execute orders which they don't want. Even the people of the army have family."

"Phew… Geez, your resolve deserves great admiration "

Fugil, somewhat amazed, smile wryly and then stood up.

"Well then, see you in three days then. As per your instructions, I will come here again. Until then, give me a definite answer. Whether you will cooperate with a < Wyvern> and fight alongside my <Bahamut>? Or—"

"……."

"Like I thought, we should kill those guys and cut off the bad habit. Will you keep asking about something which won't change? Will you give up everything for what you are trying to change? As a Prince of the Empire , if you possess the pride to fulfill it, then—"

"…I'm—"

Looking at Lux who did not change his expression, Fugil got ready to go back.

And with a hand, holding back Lux who tried to stand up and see him off, he slowly opened his mouth.

"Ah, which reminds me, Lux. That matter which you asked me to investigate about. About the medication and experimentation on a human body that the Empire's army was running."

"—Yes"

To the words which were released, Lux showed a faint agitation.

The trend of the androcracy which went to extremes.

All the women are tools.

In the imperial traditional culture, the fact that women obeyed men was taken for granted.

The scene where any male aristocrat made up a reason and abducted citizens or young girls of poor family as an outlet of his desire and manpower was not unusual.

But this time, a more horrible thing was happening.

The extremely horrifying affair where the military authorities were said to use very young girls for a certain special human experimentation.

On the surface, it was a clinical trial for making medicine to cure plague.

However, in reality, it was human experimentation for poison and weapon.

With the fact that the majority of the results were either unknown after-effects or death, they returned to their family.

“Young children — Among them, it seems that a subject chosen by a certain standard was the most suitable for the experiment; and this time, even several noble children seem to have been taken to the military

facilities. Philphie Aingram. Including that childhood friend of yours with whom you were getting along with. ”

“……”

The moment when he heard this, Lux’s expression slightly stiffened.

“It seems that the elder sister Relie went to the imperial court to appeal for letting her go while crying, but, she was flatly refused. And it seems that the medication and surgery — the experiment will begin within two weeks at the earliest.”

“Understood”

Even so, immediately regaining his composure, Lux answered.

“Then later, little brother. I believe in your resolution.”

Fugil left the mansion before one could noticed.

However, there was only darkness and the sound of rain there.

Part 2

Several days since Lux came to the Royal Knight Academy.

Lux was spending his first holiday in a two person room of the girl's dormitory.

"—Nii-san, Nii-san! Please get up."

"Hmm…"

Feeling someone shaking his body, Lux woke up.

"Airi …?"

As he half-opened his eyes against sleepiness, he first saw his little sister's face. Then, the near ceiling of the bunk beds came into view.

Airi seemed to have come into the room where Lux was sleeping to wake him up.

"Get down quickly and come to the dining room. I have to talk with you."

"Ngh… Understood."

Probably because it was a holiday, Airi wasn't wearing her school uniform, but a casual chic dress.

For Lux who had hardly lived in the same place as her, with only that, deed emotions welled up within him, but —

"I wonder how many years it's been since you have come to wake me up, Airi."

"More importantly Nii-san, what is the meaning of this ?"

The skin around the eyes of Airi who smiled suddenly darkened.

"Ah, no, um…"

Gently holding the cheeks of Lux who unintentionally averted his face with her hands, she glared at him with scornful eyes.

"During the time I didn't see you, you've become quite lazy. Please come to the dining room in less than three minutes."

"You don't even give me time to change my clothes?"

"Is that so? So usually, you change your clothes leisurely with your roommate around."

Turning a fleeting glance under the bunk bed, Airi said .

To her cold voice, Lux could only answer "I will come at once".

"Well then, I'm waiting, so."

Seeming amazed, Airi briskly left the room.

"Haa, don't get angry…"

"Munyah… Lu-chan"

At the sleep-talking of Philphie which could be heard from under the bed, Lux smile wryly.

"I'm going. Phi-chan."

Part 3

The dining room of the girl's dormitory was opened even on holidays.

However, since the time when meals were offered, was fixed, even if one woke up early in the morning, he could not get a meal immediately.

So, there were almost no students here at this early a time during holidays.

In the meantime, Lux and Airi were facing each other on the seats of a small table.

"It's good to see that you've considerably gotten used to the academy. You seem a little too close to your roommate though."

Airi said such sarcasm as she sipped her tea.

"Like I said…, that was inevitable… When I searched, the girl's dormitory had no vacant room, and I don't know why, but there was no roommate in only Philphie's room, um—"

"Hmm. Thus, you may stay at the room of a female childhood friend, huh. It's indecent, extremely immoral. Would you like me to tell Principal Relie?"

"I've already told Relie-san about it. And then, she replied "I leave my little sister to you", "it's fine if it's Lux-kun" with a smile…"

In the end, Lux was sent to Philphie's room in the girl's dormitory until a place where he could stay was found.

Philphie, as usual with her easy-going personality, far from minding it seemed to be pleased, but Lux spent every day where he could not sleep easily.

It seemed that the three girls of the Triad and Airi already knew about it, but they wanted to keep this matter a secret as much as possible.

"It looks like before correcting Nii-san's common sense , I should first admonish the principal, eh…"

As her exchanges with Relie immediately came to her mind, Airi sighed.

"So, what business do you have with me today? Airi."

"Ara, so I can't talk with you if I have no business? Nii-san."

Lux's question was returned with a mischievous smile.

Unlike a long time ago when she had a weak constitution, she had become a lady very skilled at bargaining.

"Well then, errr… are you doing well in the academy, Airi?"

"Yes, everyone takes good care of me, so Nii-san doesn't need to worry about me."

"I see. You're loved by everyone, huh."

"Don't put it like that."

He smoothly said with a refreshing smile.

"…As expected, you're good at dealings with things as usual."

Lux said with a wry smile, but he also had slightly mixed feelings.

Even if she was ejected from the succession struggle early, Airi was a “woman” of royalty.

When her mother died when she (Airi) was young, her position became complicated in various ways; if she did not acquire a determined personality from a tender age, she would not have been able to survive so far.

When he thought so, he also thought of wanting to spoil her more as her brother, but.

“And Nii-san as usual seems to always get dragged only into troubles and difficulties. If you need any help, please tell me.”

“…Ah, it’s all right.”

Without words to return coming out, Lux returned a mixed smile.

It looked like he was the one getting spoiled.

Really, my little sister has gotten strong.

“Do you also have jobs from now on today?”

"Yes. After eating breakfast, it's been planned that I will go to the "Atelier" in the academy."

"Is it for a request from a student?"

"I think it's from the academy. But, they say that it isn't a pressing business."

"Without it, you would have received invitations for a date on the holiday from the young ladies, eh."

"W-What are you saying!? There would be no such thing—"

When Lux got flustered as he was teased,

"Haa…, this is why Nii-san is… Though you've been like that since long ago. Please, be a little aware of how others see you. Thanks to the fact that Nii-san stood out early, I also receive a lot of requests for you, you know?"

Airi said so with a sigh.

"Eh…?"

"I wonder what the young ladies here are thinking, asking to arrange a place where they can speak with Nii-san or to casually appeal for them."

"…Really!?"

"Yes. In the Old Empire, women of citizen level or below were oppressed, and even most of the noble women were treated as tools for political marriage, so they apparently never felt that much close to men."

"…I wonder if it's what you call peace."

"I think it's a little exaggerated to say peace, but since the establishment of New Kingdom, there has been no major incident, so there may be no helping it. It's only been five years since the Old Empire which laid out a tyrannical rule for many years has been destroyed. I'm sure that for the people of the New Kingdom, it's still like a dream, like they are in the middle of a happy festival."

She whispered and then sipped her tea.

Contrary to her cynical words, Airi's expression did not seem that dissatisfied.

"Yes, it would be good if it continues like this forever."

"For that, don't forget our other purpose. Okay, Nii-san?"

The moment when Lux agreed, in the almost deserted dining room, Airi dropped the tone of her voice.

"… Yes, I know."

Similarly in a lower tone, Lux replied.

"Then, I can feel relieved. The analysis regarding the output of that Machine Dragon will be over soon, so until then—"

As Lux nodded, Airi finished drinking her tea and stood up.

"Huh? Aren't you eating breakfast with me? Theres still time before the cook arrives though—"

"I'll pass. If just the two of us are seen by everyone of the class, they're likely to be jealous after all."

To Airi's words which posed as a joke, Lux smiled wryly.

"No, there's no way that would happen. After all — we're siblings."

"Besides, if we're together anymore than this, I would be more reluctant to leave."

She said in a small voice mixed with the fragrance of tea.

"Eh…?"

"It's a joke, Nii-san. Well then, please be careful so as not to draw out that sword."

Saying so at the end, Airi left the dining room.

Part 4

After finishing his breakfast, Lux decided to begin today's chores.

By the way, the written requests addressed to Lux, far from decreasing as the curiosity at first disappeared, increased in number as time passed, and he had already reached a physically impossible domain. Therefore, Lux

settled down in the way of whether to accept the tasks judging from the importance and the degree of relative priority.

"Well, I'm used to not having days off, so it's fine anyway."

Rustlingly looking through the bundle of requests dropped in, Lux sighed.

The jobs such as watering the flower bed, studying and helping with cleaning the dormitory were still better.

Baggage carrier for shopping, help changing clothes, massage, being a person to talk to during tea a party and the like exceeded the mixing up of public and private matters; it was very likely that they were mistaking Lux for a butler or something.

"…I mean, about half of them aren't jobs that I, a man, should do!?"

He unintentionally retorted to the bundle of requests.

But, this was not a joke and since there seemed to be a lot of students who have written seriously, he had a headache.

Be that as it may, if there were jobs which should be given priority, he could use them as an excuse and turned down those requests, so for now he could relax.

The job which he had to do today was a request from the academy.

[Workplace] Royal Knight Academy Machine Dragon research and development site, Atelier

[Client] Machine Dragon Research and Development Chief

[Work contents] Machine Dragon Operation Test

The atelier was a large detached building located in the corner of the school premises.

He had several times helped with blacksmith works, but an atelier for Drag-Rides was a first for him.

He was slightly anxious about doing a job he was not familiar with, but he was also looking forward to it.

Originally, he intended to come to work as a mechanic apprentice of Machine Dragons, so it was welcoming.

"Excuse me. It's Lux Acadia. I came for the commissioned work."

He lightly knocked and greeted in a loud voice.

"……"

However, the answer to Lux's greeting which was slightly tinged with tension was only silence.

"Huh…?"

He once again checked by looking at his requests note and the academy's big clock.

There was no error.

Both the place and time should be right—

As he tried to turn the doorknob, he found that it was not locked.

"That's really careless…"

The existence and technology of Drag-Rides should be top secret in any country.

Just because it's within the school premises, I wonder if this is all right.

While smiling wryly, Lux quietly stepped inside.

"Excuse me. Is there anyone—"

Lux unintentionally swallowed his voice which he was about to utter.

A large space in this brick building filled with the smell of oil and metals.

At the back where innumerable parts and tools were scattered about, there was a monster.

In the court of the imperial capital a long time ago.

Since he became the chore Prince, he had seen many Machine Dragons in the Machine Dragon hangar before holding a mock battle.

But—, this was totally different from them.

A strange Machine Dragon which fused halves of the bodies of a <Wyvern> and a <Wyrm> was over there.

"This is—?"

"Ngh… what the heck is it? So noisy—"

As Lux was looking at it in utter amazement, he suddenly heard a voice from the nearby sofa.

"Lisha-sama…?"

Sleeping there covered with a thin blanket was Lisha dressed in a white gown on her uniform.

Probably because she had stayed overnight, her whole body got slightly dirty and her hair was also slightly disheveled.

Incidentally, her uniform was also very messy and her blouse was turned inside out. Lux unintentionally averted his gaze.

"What are you doing in a place like this?"

"…Huh? Lux, why are you here—? …Ah, I see. Now I remembered, I had requested you. Fuhaa…"

While rubbing her sleepy eyes, Lisha said something which he did not really understand.

When Lux went out again and got tea in the dining room, Lisha who fixed her messed up clothes drank it in one gulp.

"Fufu. You're quite thoughtful, eh, Lux. As expected of the man that I acknowledged!"

With a behavior unlike a Princess', Lisha showed a happy smile.

She probably came for a visit of the atelier and ended up staying overnight.

"Good morning. By the way, where is the chief of the atelier?"

As Lux asked after calming down,

"Here, here, right before your eyes."

Lisha pointed at her small face and said.

"Yes?"

"You still haven't noticed? It looks like I need to somewhat correct my assessment regarding your insight! I'm saying that I'm the chief."

"…Eh?"

No, she's certainly wearing a gown which seems to be for work, but…

Honestly, it only looked like a child's playing attire.

The hems were so long that they dragged on the floor.

"Whew. You're very good at provocation. All right, I'll ride on it."

As Lisha proudly laughed, she drew out the two Sword Devices hanging on her waist at the same time.

"…!" "—Come out. The Primordial Chaos Dragon that is the perforating wedge against Heaven and Earth. < Chimeric Wyvern>!"

At that moment, the strange Machine Dragon which could be seen at the back of the atelier turned into photons, and was transferred behind Lisha.

"This is—!?"

"A connection should not be necessary. All right, go back."

Lisha simultaneously wielded her two Sword Devices and put them in the sheath.

Then, the Machine Dragon which was summoned once again changed into light particles, and went back to the depths of the warehouse.

"…What is it, that thing?"

Staring in wonder at it, Lux muttered.

"How's that, were you surprised?"

Lisha, who was pleased with Lux's reaction folded her arms and stuck out her chest with pride.

"<Chimeric Wyvern>. It's the world's first original Drag-Ride which I've developed."

Lux doubted his ears.

"—!?"

Drag-Rides were ancient weapons excavated in ruins.

Since they had been discovered more than ten years ago, their concrete principle even now remained a

mystery, and at best only adjustments of the degree of either installing the existing parts or replacing them could be performed.

A remodeling into a totally different Machine Dragon like this should existed nowhere in the world—

"If you can process the Mithril Dite and Force Core, there seems to be a lot of things which can be produced. Afterward, the performance and output of that body are quite impressive, but it's a little neck that one has to use two Sword Devices for the activation."

He had never heard about the fusion of two kinds of Machine Dragons and dual wielding Sword Devices.

If she had combined two original machines and even learned to operate two swords, then this girl concealed an unimaginable potential as an engineer.

"Um, who are you really, Lisha-sama?"

"Fufu. Did you get a better opinion of me?"

Smiling contentedly, Lisha sat on the chair before the work unit and looked up at Lux.

"Praise me more. You know, it isn't because I have the position of the Princess of the New Kingdom that I've been allowed the foolishness of letting you admit into the academy. This is because I show ability and gave results enough to be entrusted a personal atelier at this age. How's that, are you surprised?"

"By the way, at the back there, there is something which looks like a serious burn mark or rather trace of an explosion though…"

As Lux pointed at the room kept opened as the door was broken and asked,

"…Failure is the mother of success."

Holding down her slight agitation, Lisha asserted.

Not inquiring any further, Lux asked.

"Perhaps is this research the reason why you always sleep during class?"

"That's half correct. But, I do properly listen to lectures and I can't really be half asleep during the practical training. Instructor Raigree is also totally merciless to me who is the Princess. If I skimp in the Machine Dragon's

training or don't take it seriously, I'll have a hard time. She really deserves respect."

Lisha was not sarcastic; she really admired her.

"Then, what about the other half?"

"Take this, it's your Sword Device."

Not answering the question, Lisha took the Sword Device which was on the desk and handed it to Lux.

That which Lux received was undeniably the sword matching his <Wyvern>.

"If I'm not mistaken, I should have asked the mechanic for the repair of this—"

"Yes. I've fixed your Drag-Ride here"

As she smoothly said so as if it was a matter of course, Lux doubted his ears.

A Machine Dragon's repair, maintenance and adjustment were so difficult that an expert other than the user was required.

Lux's <Wyvern> was partially destroyed in the fight with the Abyss, so he thought it would take quite the time and money to repair it, but—

"Is it true!?"

"It's the Machine Dragon of the hero who saved the school. You don't really have to be surprised. But, I stayed up all night several days and finished it just this morning."

"Thank you very much!"

Lux unintentionally bowed with a smile.

She was skilled to the extent of taking apart two Machine Dragons and building a new Machine Dragon.

For a naturally gifted engineer like Lisha, this much might be simple.

But, even Lux could easily imagine how much hard it was for a small-sized girl alone to repair a Machine Dragon built of a large, heavy metal.

"Hmm… I-It's not a bad feeling to see you so happy… P-Praise me more; if y-you can even pat my head—"

Lisha suddenly blushed and lightly scratched her head .

And looking at Lux who asked back “eh?”, she cleared her throat confusedly.

“W-Well then, test it at once to see whether it moves properly.”

“Yes.”

Lux drew the Sword Device hung on the belt of his waist and muttered the pass code.

“—Come forth, the Branded Wing Dragon which is the symbol of power. Obey my sword and fly, <Wyvern>.”

Light particles gathered before Lux and it instantly transferred — summoned beside him.

There, his blue Machine Dragon which should have been destroyed was completely—

“Huh…?”

Lux cocked his head in puzzlement.

Completely — the appearance was different from what Lux had been using.

Among the three types of general-purpose Machine Dragons, the <Wyvern> was the Machine Dragon with the flight ability.

Lux had the mechanic adjust it with that (flight ability) as a base and put on a thicker armor, but…

"Hey, what is this!?"

There was a strange dragon with an abominable appearance there.

Breath Guns linked on both shoulders and an injection port for flight in the back and legs.

Although the large-sized blade which he was using before remained to a very poor degree, more than half of the thick armor was chipped off and became sharp like the blade of a naked sword.

"Ah, while I was repairing it, it was interesting in various ways. So I remodeled it a little."

"This is beyond the level of 'a little'!? You've even installed something like a drill on the left hand!? What is this!?"

"Oh that? It's cool, right? It's a rare parts even among those found in the ruins."

To Lisha who looked happy, Lux was at a loss for words.

He recalled the bad things about the engineers and craftsmen, which he had seen during his previous odd jobs up until now.

"To begin with, it's weird. That Drag-Ride which you were using, that is."

Before he could speak, Lisha began to talk.

"In addition to the basic air frame, there were only parts of armor strengthening stuck here and there. Things like uselessly thickening the armor of a flight type Machine Dragon and raising the weight are stuff that a complete amateur does, you know? Like this, it can't even show its original performance at all. To begin with, judging from the appearance, it's too lame."

"No, I don't think appearance has anything to do with it…"

To Lisha's angry look, Lux, though restrained, rebutted. But,

"Are you an idiot! Concerning Drag-Rides, functionality is first, and the coolness is the second most important thing! Just looking at this, I will become miserable for having been unable to win against such a quack Machine Dragon!"

"……"

It's a cruel way of putting it…

Lux thought so and sighed.

"Um, I'm sorry… It isn't like I don't understand your feelings. But, could you return it to how it was? That was the handiest for me and I was also used to it, so—"

What Lisha said was not off the mark.

No, it was a matter of fact. Far from being painfully true, in the first place, it was all as she said, but—, even so Lux had a reason for why he didn't want to change it.

"…No matter what?"

"Yes, please."

He bowed his head.

"It can't be helped, eh. Even though this remodeling took a lot of time…"

Rather, didn't it take time because of the remodeling?

Lux could not help but think so, but Lisha, while grumpy, somehow compromised.

"It's all right if the armaments are the same, right? The large-sized sword being the main weapon, and the Breath Gun, Daggers and Wire Tail the sub-weapons. I will thicken the whole armor mainly with the PL – 12 type, I'll also raise both the barrier and output, and as for the roar generator of the head, with a high output possible type—"

"Yes, please."

As Lux answered, Lisha promptly began the maintenance with practiced movements.

"But you know, it's weird after all. This Drag-Ride…"

Lisha muttered so with an expression which was not somewhere lively.

“It’s really strange; the balance is obviously a problem. If you want to crush your opponent by endurance and firepower, it will be better to use a Ground-type Machine Dragon whose gross weight could be raised; in a Flying-type Machine Dragon which has high mobility, there is no meaning to go so far to strengthen the defense . Rather, it will become heavy and slow, it will unnecessarily increase the burden on the user too, — are you a masochist?”

“……”

“Well, it’s fine. There are also things which only the human user can understand after all. It’s none other than your request.”

Lux was relieved inwardly.

Any ordinary Machine Dragon mechanic would feel a sense of incongruity to Lux’s <Wyvern>.

He could not talk about the reason and he could not let the reason be noticed, either, but—,

"Hey, Lux."

"…!?"

Suddenly being called to, Lux's spine slightly shivered as he was taken aback.

"By the way — may I leave only the drill?"

With her loveliest smile so far, Lisha said.

"You can't."

"You're really stingy, even though you're just a former Prince!"

"That has nothing to do with it."

With that last exchange, the silent work continued for a while.

In the early afternoon, Lux's Machine Dragon was completely restored.

For the time being, it was good that his Machine Dragon was repaired.

Lux felt relieved so, but,

"All right, then it's time to go."

"Eh? Where?"

"Isn't it obvious? What do you think I stayed up all night to repair this for? Of course, it's for your new workplace."

Seeing Lisha with sparkling eyes, Lux got a bad feeling about this.

Part 5

Even in the afternoon of the holiday, a part of the school facilities was opened.

Though few, club activities also existed and there were also students who were active on holiday.

But, it was in the waiting room of the practice field that Lux who was brought by Lisha went to.

It was a slightly wide room for changing into Dress Gear — exclusive clothing in order to equip with Machine Dragon, and for discussing tactics.

Several dozens of students wearing Dress Gears were waiting for Lux there.

Of course, there was no man other than Lux.

There were students whom he recognized, Krulcifer and Philphie.

And Sharis, Tillfarr and Nokuto of the Triad.

As the students gathered regardless of class and grade, more than half of them were unfamiliar faces.

“Do you really intend to let him join the “Knight Squadron”, Lisha-sama?”

A tall female student whom Lux didn't even know the name of, said so as she looked at him.

“That goes without saying. He will show his ability from here on. It’s for that reason that I repaired Lux’s Drag-Ride after all.”

“Errr — what are you guys talking about?”

As Lux cocked his head in puzzlement not knowing what they were talking about,

"Princess Lizsharte would like to recommend you to this unit. A guerrilla unit which can also use Drag-Rides, other than during practical skill exercises while being an officer cadet. That's the special unit "Knight Squadron"."

The third-year student Sharis said with a refreshing smile.

As he heard the explanation in detail, it was apparently something like this.

In the current New Kingdom, there was always a shortage in talented Drag-Knights who could perform in actual combat.

Moreover, this place was the Fort City which could be called the bastion (defensive position) of the capital.

Therefore, not letting young students with outstanding talent and ability fight in accordance with the rules was pearls thrown before swine.

Thereupon, a guerrilla unit — the "Knight Squadron" which holds special battle permission while being composed of officer cadets was established, and they delved into long day and night fighting techniques.

If one belonged to the “Knight Squadron”, he could get a reward by assembling a platoon with several people and receiving missions from the army.

Thus, even in the perspective of Lux’s “chores”, it would be a very useful place, but—

“But you know, the “Knight Squadron” isn’t some kind of place where anyone who wants to join can join.”

As Sharis’ explanation ended, a girl whom he was not familiar with muttered so.

“You must get a high evaluation with the results of the campus battles. Your level as Drag-Knight should be more than the intermediate level. And, the majority of members of the current “Knight Squadron” should acknowledge your ability and vote for the approval of you joining.”

These three things seemed to be the conditions for joining.

“Um, but I attended the academy since only several days ago, and my practical skills are also—”

"Unfortunately, it seems to be so. I've heard the rumor about you being the "Weakest Undefeated" though."

As the female student who seemed calm said so with a wry smile,

"I don't mind."

Lisha cut off the flow, full of confidence.

"The first two conditions are just a given. Most of the students who are here should already know Lux's ability. After all, he had a draw in a one-to-one fight against me and went against the Abyss all alone."

"Well, it's true, but…"

Overwhelmed by Lisha's momentum, the tall girl faltered.

"But, now the third-year members of the "Knight Squadron" aren't there. We can't decide about it at such a time…"

A small-sized girl said so as to add to the tall girl's case, but

"The whole majority is properly here. Even if all those who aren't here vote 'no', it won't matter if all the members here agree, right?"

In the end, Lisha settled the talk.

"Why aren't the third-year students here?"

As Lux asked Sharis who was beside him in low voice,

"Well, currently the third-year students went to the capital for practice for about two weeks. Due to some circumstances on my end, I couldn't go this time."

"Then, won't it better to decide after the third year members come back?"

"Well — I think that it's just the opposite."

Suddenly, Krulcifer who kept silent until now reacted to Lux's question.

"The Princess believes that precisely now is the best time of let you join. The third-year leader of the Knight Squadron is quite the man-hater after all—"

"Eh…?"

“Third-year student, Celestia Ralgris. An influential person who is the daughter of a Duke House and is said to be the strongest of the academy. She’s also popular and a lot of students admired her too. If that person was presently in the academy, it’s probably more likely that even something like letting a man attend the academy would have been revoked.”

“……”

In other words, using the chance when that man-hating leader is absent, Lisha wanted to rush the matter into a fait accompli[5].

“Krulcifer, don’t talk nonsense. I only do what I should do as the New Kingdom Princess.”

Lisha who heard the talk cheekily rebutted.

“The Abyss's sudden attack without warning the other day. Although it didn’t lead to serious consequences, the cause is still unknown, so it’s under investigation. Ensuring (or securing) an immediate asset is the natural judgment. Especially all the more since the majority of third-year students are absent now.”

She says something that sounds really good.

Lux admired inwardly.

He had thought that she was unlike a Princess, but unexpectedly, she also seemed to have political ability.

"But as expected, even I won't think of letting him join without him going through any procedure."

Before a rebuttal came, Lisha who was at the center of the waiting room looked around everyone.

"We will hold a Machine Dragon confrontation battle in teams from here on. And with the battle outcome, we should decide whether or not to allow Lux to join."

She said so and quickly began to choose the opponents .

"……"

(She completely ignored my opinion, huh…)

Lux really wanted to say so a little bit, but…

"Lux. If you do missions and security guard jobs in the Knight Squadron, you'll also get rewards. It will help you pay off your debt! You should just gladly work like a horse!"

As he saw Lisha smiling, he felt that it would be useless even if he refused.

As Lux who was at a loose end watched around the waiting room,

"I mean, so Philphie was also a member of the "Knight Squadron"?"

As Lux who caught sight of his childhood friend in the corner asked,

"……"

Philphie who gnawed snack biscuits did not react.

"Errr, Philphie…?"

As he thought that she didn't and called out to her again,

"…It's Phi-chan, right?"

In a slightly emphasized tone, Philphie muttered.

"Eh…!? D-Do you want me call you that even here …!?"

"Yes."

Philphie nodding with a serious look, Lux's face turned red.

If it weren't for this, she would really be a good girl, but—

But that aside, it was unexpected.

The last time they met was seven years ago; in the Old Empire's society before the coup d'état, women had little opportunity to get in contact with Drag-Rides.

Therefore, Lux had no memory of having seen Philphie ever used a Drag-Ride.

But, to think that this girl with a gentle atmosphere had enough ability to join the "Knight Squadron" —

"Phi…chan, are you strong?"

"Ordinary, I guess."

As he awkwardly called her by her nickname, a simple answer came back.

But upon close inspection, not a Sword Device of a general-purpose Machine Dragon, but a short sword decorated with a unique design was in the scabbard hung on her waist.

"She's very strong, this girl. She is the user of the Divine Drag-Ride <Typhon> after all. Together with my <Fafnir>."

"Eeeh…!?"

As Krulcifer added, Lux unintentionally opened his mouth.

To think that Philphie possessed enough skill to be able to use a Divine Drag-Ride which even first-class Drag-Knights couldn't handle so often.

And also Krulcifer.

Even if they were called “Knight Squadron”, they were still officer cadets after all.

It looked like his preconception was greatly wrong.

Even excluding the third-year members, if there were even three users of Divine Drag-Rides, it was a military power worthy of threat.

Which meant, even the missions given were more likely to be suitable as such.

From now on whether he wanted to or not, he might be sent on dangerous missions.

(…What shall I do?)

『For that, I hope that you didn’t forget the other purpose, Nii-san.

He recalled the words said by Airi early in the morning during breakfast.

Before attracting a curious attention, he started thinking to decline joining the unit.

He was thankful that a hefty reward was given, but if he got involved in too deeply, it would be likely to affect the “other purpose”.

“Hey, Lux. I settle the talk.”

While he was thinking about such a thing, his shoulder was patted by Lisha.

“You and I will team up and fight against the opposition’s team. Hurry up and go to the compartment to change into a Dress Gear.”

“……”

It looked like it was already too late.

“What? You may also change without hiding if you want, you know?”

“I am not worried about that!”

As Lux’s face turned red as he panicked to Lisha’s teasing,

"You peep, but you don't want to be seen yourself, huh."

Even Krulcifer who was in the corner muttered in a subdued voice, and Lux was at wits' end.

"I'll go change!"

Lux hurried up and changed into the Dress Gear he was given and came out of the compartment.

"So—, I understand that Lisha-sama and I will team up, but how many people are there in the opponent team ?"

"Yes. It seems to be all the members here that met with Lux-san for the first time."

"Eeeeeeeeeh!?"

In other words, all the members present except Krulcifer, Philphie and the three girls of the Triad.

"Wait, isn't it reckless no matter how you look at it…? "

Lisha was strong.

Even compared to Drag-Knights that Lux had confronted so far, she was probably the most powerful.

But it should also be the same for the Knight Squadron 's members present here.

"It's all right. According to my calculations, even this should work out good enough. If it's not enough, well let 's see, it's not too late to change your Machine Dragon to attack specialization even now—"

"…I'll do my best as it is."

"Is that so? I'll fight with the <Chimeric Wyvern>, but — well it's fine. We're outnumbered anyway. Once it starts, even you'll have no choice but to fight."

To Lisha's words which somewhere had a hidden meaning, Lux sighed.

Both parties finished their preparations and went out to the practice field.

And the mock battle began.

Part 6

"What the hell, geez!"

Immediately after the team confrontation battle which ended in no time.

Lisha who returned to the waiting room of the practice field was shouting like a spoiled child.

Most of the "Knight Squadron" members had already changed and left the room, only Lux, Lisha and several acquaintances remained in the room.

"Please, cheer up already. We've won after all."

As Lux calmed her so with a troubled face,

"Why didn't you attack even once!? I should have also got on the opponent team! You wasted a rare chance! You fool!"

Lisha raised her voice with somewhat teary eyes.

The team confrontation battle for letting Lux join the " Knight Squadron".

Overturning the overwhelming handicap of two against ten, Lux and Lisha had won.

By the way, it was Lisha who defeated all the opponents' Machine Dragons.

While Lux was dodging and defending against the enemy's attacks, the battle ended.

Although they won as a result, Lux's joining was rejected by the majority vote, and Lisha was furious.

The reason that he was not able to earn an affirmative vote was because Lux had not attacked even once.

Though he felt bad for Lisha, Lux was inwardly relieved.

"Was my strategy a failure? Or…, was there a problem with the opponent team formation…? But, by my initial expectations…"

While grumblingly muttering, Lisha began to change her clothes on the other side of the compartment.

(It will be bad if I go back without permission, right…?)

When Lux who had finished changing from the Dress Gear into his uniform first, sat down before the table of the waiting room and was waiting.

"Good work, Lu-chan."

Philphie who was sitting in the opposite side suddenly called out to him.

The vote ended; his childhood friend who had finished changing into her uniform remained in the waiting room, peeled a fruit and ate it.

Or it was supposed to be like this, but—

"…Uh huh. Thank you—. Wait, what is this?"

"Orange."

A brief answer came back with the peeled orange.

She pinched the fresh fruit flesh where the white pith was removed with her thin fingertips, and held it out in front of Lux.

"No, I understood by seeing, but…"

"I help you remove the orange's white peel."

Such words were said with an indifferent tone.

Lux brooded over their meaning for just several seconds,

"Eh...? Is it, by any chance — what I think it is!?"

Suddenly, his cheeks became hot.

Lux remembered that when they were children, Philphie used to peel the pelt of the orange which he was not able to eat as he disliked that part (pelt).

"T-Thank you, Phi-chan. B-But, I'm not a kid anymore, so I can't do that much alone…"

When he answered so as he was a little embarrassed,

"…You don't want?"

Philphie intently turned her pupils and looked into Lux's face.

It was a somewhat dejected and lonely tone.

"T-That isn't it—"

"Then, eat."

When he was at loss, Philphie softly pushed the orange's flesh to Lux's lips.

Seeing that he received it with his mouth, Philphie slightly smiled.

"Is it delicious?"

"Y-Yes…"

"I'm glad."

(…Rather, it's so embarrassing that I can't taste it…!)

Looking at Philphie who was somewhere happy, Lux was bewildered,

"It's all good that you're so close, but I think you should watch your surroundings a little more."

"…!? N-No, this is—"

Teased by Krulcifer who was in a corner of the room, Lux became flustered.

When he turned his eyes around as he wondered whether they were seen by others,

"…Hmm. Even though I'm unusually troubled, to think that you flirt with another woman before my eyes. I 'm envious, Lux."

Lisha who had finished changing and came out muttered as she was amazed.

"However…, I see. There was that way (hand), huh…"

And walking at a quick pace, she came before Lux who was sitting.

(It's bad. I'll be scolded—)

As Lux closed his eyes thinking so.

Something was slapped on the table before him.

"Huh…?"

What was put on the table was a sheet of paper — a request for a job.

"W-Which reminds me after this, you shouldn't have undertaken any job requests in particular, right?"

Lisha who sharpened her lips leaned her face immediately to Lux's.

When he was sure that she was angry, her cheeks somewhat turned red and she averted her eyes from Lux.

"Eh, well… yes."

…I wonder what the matter is.

When Lux replied as he wondered so, Lisha quickly took a breath and stuck out her chest.

"T-Then, it's an additional request. Um—, come with me now."

Part 7

Cross-shaped Fort City, Cross Feed.

From the sunrise until late at night, the people's bustle and hustle had not stopped in this first block which was located in the center.

Probably because of the early spring, the evening sunlight was still strong.

Lux and Lisha were walking on the main street of maintained stone pavements with a lot of pedestrian traffic.

(She asked me to come along, so it was for shopping, huh… I was surprised.)

『U-Um…, I think that in order to form a partnership, it's important to know each other well. After all, I still don't know much about a man of the same age…

The reason why Lisha invited Lux to go out seemed to be something like that.

(But, I'm still nervous. To be with a Princess of the same age, only the two of us is—)

When looking to the side as he thought so, Lisha who was also somewhat restless was looking at the cityscape.

『Oh my, to think that you're going out with the Princess; not bad, Lux-kun

He remembered that when he parted from Lisha once to go prepare himself, he was told so by Principal Relie who happened to pass by in the neighborhood.

『Someone like Lizsharte-sama who immerses herself only in fighting and research has no immunity in the love area. If she was suddenly pushed into a boy she likes, she might easily fall, you know?

『No, I don't think it can be something like that…

At that time, Lux denied it with an indescribable expression, but—

"Come to think of it. Lisha-sama, do you often go out into town?"

"N-No…, not at all."

To Lux's question, Lisha firmly shook her head.

"These days, I was always working in the atelier after all. I was busy with the Drag-Ride's remodeling..."

While looking around curiously, Lisha turned a fleeting glance at Lux,

“Um..., d-do you often go out? With other girls—”

She asked so in an irritated tone.

“N-No... I also have a debt to pay off, so I've no time for that.”

“I-I see...”

As Lux denied, Lisha smiled as she was relieved,

“All right. Then, since it's the first time for both of us, I shall escort you! If I'm not mistaken, there is a good restaurant in this urban area... No, wait.”

When she suddenly stopped moving, Lisha touched her uniform (as she was searching something) and made a bitter expression.

“What's wrong?”

“U-Uh huh... Well, it'll be all right, I guess. I'm a Princess, so I should be able to ask for a credit...”

“By any chance... did you forget your wallet?”

“Ugh... Um, it was just accidentally today...”

To Lisha who looked downward as she was embarrassed, Lux smiled wryly.

Seeing her all flustered, he felt somewhat relaxed.

I guess she isn't really used to going out.

Then—, within the range possible in my meager experience, I wanted this girl to enjoy herself.

Lux thought so.

“It's not good. The New Kingdom Princess shouldn't easily ask for credit.”

“T-Then, what...? Are you already saying to call it a day...?”

Looking at the somehow lonely Lisha, Lux kindly smiled.

“If you don't mind me, I will offer you hospitality.”

After a few minutes. Lux and Lisha sat side by side at the curb of the central open space and were looking at the sunset.

The apple pie which he gave to Lisha was something reputed to be the most delicious even in the stands of the Fort City, and it was a shop where Lux once worked at for odds jobs.

“How is it? Lisha-sama”

“Hmm. it's sweet and delicious. Thank you...”

While biting the apple pie from the paper package, Lisha frequently sent a passionate gaze to Lux's face.

Lux did not have that much on hand, but looking at Lux who was accompanied by Lisha, the employee of the stall gave them to him for free.

In the end, giving his thanks together with Lisha, he decided to gratefully accept them, but—

“However, being well known even to the stalls, you are appreciated by the people of this city, eh.”

“My face is just known due to working odd jobs.”

To that mutter of admiration, Lux replied with a wry smile.

“B-But, it's strange... Even though I planned to make you appreciate me, but like this..., instead I'm—”

To Lisha who muttered in a low voice; Lux cocked his head in puzzlement,

“What's the matter?”

“N-No, how to put it — this area is glug-glug since some time now...!”

Looking at Lisha whose cheeks reddened, and that set a hand on her chest,

(I wonder if she's nervous after coming out to downtown after a long time.)

Lux thought so.

“Are you all right? If you aren't feeling well, we should rest somewhere...”

“I-I'm all right... If I sit for a little bit, I think I'll be fine...”

“I haven't that much knowledge in medical treatment. But, I know a place of good and free medical treatment; so if there is anything, please tell me immediately.”

“Ah, yes...”

After giving a vague answer with a flushing expression, Lisha entrusted her body to Lux for a while.

“S-Speaking of which — do men prefer girls like your childhood friend?”

“...Yes?”

To the words suddenly released by Lisha, Lux looked puzzled.

“I don't really understand... I haven't thought that much about wanting to be spoiled by someone, or being together with someone else. But—”

While muttering with upturned eyes, Lisha timidly held out an apple pie to Lux.

“Errr—”

“Hey, can you taste this for poison?”

“You've already started eating it though...?”

“D-Don't worry about trivial things!? Just do it!”

No, I think it's pretty important though...

Swallowing such a retort, Lux bit the pie which was held out.

“Ah...”

The crunchy pie crust and the sweet fragrance of the apple spread in his mouth.

“T-There is no poison. Now, can you rest assured?”

As Lux smiled, Lisha once again ate the pie while staring at him with feverish eyes—

“Uh, auh... Fuuh...”

After her face became red to the extent that it could be clearly seen even in the evening, her body lost all its strength there.

“Hey!? What's the matter? Lisha-sama!”

As Lux hurriedly caught Lisha who was about to fall,

“Hiyan...!?”

- munyu*. A soft sensation was transmitted to Lux's palm.

Her chest that was being rubbed, although of a petite built, firmly asserted its size; Lisha’s thin body shook in Lux's arms as she was startled.

(Shit! she'll get mad...!)

Although he held her on the spur of the moment, he had done a terrible thing.

(But..., it was very soft, huh. Lisha-sama's— not that! What am I thinking!?)

“Ah, um — I-I'm sorry!”

As Lux who changed the position of his hand apologized while being confused,

“W-Well, I will forgive... But, more importantly—”

Lisha said so and tightly grabbed the collar of her uniform,

“I-I don't really know why, but since some time now, my chest is hot and I feel dizzy...”

While exhaling a feverish breath, she muttered as such.

“W-What's wrong? Um, I will bring you to the nearby house for free treatment—”

“I-I'm all right... I will get better after a short time, I think, probably...”

Lux anxiously supported Lisha for a while, but after a few minutes, she regained her composure before long and returned to her usual condition.

The curfew time was approaching, so they decided to return to the academy and began to walk slowly.

Lux was also surprised by Lisha's sudden request this time, but

“T-Today, um... it was quite fun. Thank you, Lux...”

With just such a sentence from Lisha, he felt like he had been rewarded.

Part 8

“Speaking of which, I'm sorry. For not being able to join.”

Several minutes later. As Lux once again said so while walking his way back on the deserted street,

“Don't worry about it. I can do the joining recommendation in the next month after 5 more days later after all. From tomorrow after school, we will begin with the coordination training at once.”

Lisha replied so with a smile on her whole face.

“Do you still intend to get me into the "Knight Squadron"!?”

“Well, as for the strategy. You plunge right in the middle of the enemy camp, and I blow away the opponents who have their attention attracted to you one after another. Afterward, while I defend you, you can at least defeat one machine.”

“Isn't it a little too cruel...? In various meanings.”

Unintentionally, it was tactic which brought a cold sweat to the spine.

Judging from Lisha's tone, probably... she was serious.

"...More importantly, about Lisha-sama's <Chimeric Wyvern>... That was amazing, eh."

"Hmm? Did you come to want it? I had quite a hard time making it, but if you want, I could specially make another one for you."

"Can you make many machines like that?"

"Even if I make it, it will be useless now though. it is 50% stronger than a general-purpose Machine Dragon, but the burden of stamina aside, the operation difficulty isn't on the same level as that of an average Divine Drag-Ride. Even the Sword Devices' dual wielding can't be used by anyone other than me. Do you want to try it?"

"No, thank you..."

Honestly, Lux also thought that it was impossible.

The conception of combining two kinds of Machine Dragons performances was certainly amazing, but it could probably not be mastered by anyone except Lisha who was a genius engineer and also a first-class Drag-Knight.

“How about somehow improving it in a way that it will be easier to use? To the extent that even only the students of the "Knight Squadron" are able to use it. As a Princess—”

Words came out naturally so.

There were not words in order to go along with the talk, he truly thought so.

He might have voice out what he was vaguely thinking all the time inwardly.

The rule of the empire for a long time.

And precisely because they were released from it now, he wanted her to become a good Princess.

He wanted her to be a Princess who thinks about the people and considered others' feelings.

Such a desire of Lux might have unintentionally been voiced out.

“As a Princess?”

"Y-Yes... As the New Kingdom Princess, you will be more useful to the people like that—"

However,

"I don't need it."

Lux shivered to the coldness of the voice which came back.

With neither anger, sorrow nor even apathy. A hollow voice which lost all colors.

For just several seconds, the surrounding atmosphere froze.

"Phew. I'm often told that. Both my technique of Machine Dragon development and results in the school battles. I get tired whenever I'm summoned to the capital about things such as 'you should be proud as a Princess' or 'it's a great achievement'."

"What..., do you mean?"

"Before that, answer my question. What is a Princess?"

A concise question of only a few words.

But, Lux was not able to return an answer to it.

“My father, Count Atismata who raised a coup d’état has died without sitting on the New Kingdom's throne because of an injury at that time. But, his fame remains and my aunt, Queen Raffi succeeded the country. And I, as a memento of the late great man, got the status of Princess of the New Kingdom. I'm merely that much of a human.”

“That's not...”

“But, the citizens are thankful and extolled the idol who is me. It's interesting, isn't it? It's a laughable story. The Old Empire had thoroughly laid out a tyrannical rule after all. As a substitute, they force me to be a splendid person of character like a Princess. If I don't do it, they will urge me. They will say incomprehensible things like 'you have that responsibility, don't run away, carry out your mission'.”

“.....”

“There is a place where I want to stop by a little.”

Lisha muttered so and headed to a vacant land with a good view which deviated from the main street.

And, when confirming that there was no one around, she lowered her voice and began to talk.

“Won't you tell me? Lux Acadia. You, a Prince of the destroyed Empire, tell me the way of a righteous princess .”

“... I, to me—”

He could not answer.

A society and laws without unequal and unjust discrimination.

No, it did not have to be such a thing.

But, just a world without unreasonable suffering—

The wishes which Lux was harboring were all crushed on that day five years ago.

“Do you remember the Old Empire's brand applied on my belly?”

Lisha said with a dry smile.

“.....”

“Most of the citizens admire and extol my father. That he is the hero remaining in the history that destroyed the Empire. Many years before the coup d'état occurred, my father had opposed the Empire and raised an objection to its policy. Naturally, he incurred the enmity of those from the Empire's side, to the point that it wasn't strange that his precious daughter was kidnapped—”

“...Don't tell me”

When Lux arrived at that guess, Lisha laughed incidentally.

“Right, I was caught by the Old Empire at that time five years ago. And, I was used as a bargaining chip to my father who was furthering the coup d’état plan, but in the end — I was abandoned. This carved seal is the proof that I was considered the possession of the Old Empire.”

“—!?”

As tension ran to Lux's expression, Lisha continued in a calm tone.

"Actually, my father was probably a great man. In order to bring down that Empire, my father should have concentrated all his efforts to plan the coup d'état. He couldn't possibly ruin everything because of one life which is his daughter's. It had been only about two months that I had been put under house arrest, but I was abandoned, and was no longer the Earl's daughter or anything. My mother died from illness, but since I had a little sister, in the dawn when the coup d'état succeeded, that child should have become the Princess of the new royal family. Instead of me."

"....."

"However, it seems that my little sister was killed during the coup d'état. So, my aunt, the queen of the New Kingdom who had no child accepted me, who was rescued, as her adopted child and I acceded to the position of Princess. In order to gather up the country together as a memento of my late father, the hero Count Atismata, and as the symbol of the New Kingdom. The fact that I was abandoned by my father and applied with the brand of the Old Empire was concealed."

"....."

At that time—, when Lux and Lisha met for the first time.

So that's why she had wore the towel in the bathtub, hiding her skin even to other female students.

Since her secret which mustn't be seen was seen by Lux, who was none other than a Prince of the Old Empire, Lisha went so far against Lux—

“Lux. Was it painful for you to be no longer a Prince of the Old Empire?”

Lisha asked with a self deprecating smile.

“Well... I—”

Coup d’état five years ago.

A scene a few days earlier than it was revived in his memory.

His little sister and his childhood friend who had danger approaching her due to the Empire.

Lux, as a member of the royal family and as a "person with pride", thought that he wanted to do something about this country.

However—,

“I wasn't even able to do anything which seems like a Prince, so...”

As Lux quietly shook his head, Lisha laughed lonely.

“You know, I didn't like my father. When thinking about it now, he might have rather pretended to act indifferent towards me to keep me away from the danger of the coup d’état. My father's judgment of abandoning me might have been something very brave and which should be praised. As one of the citizens who had suffered a tyrannical rule, I might have respected and admired my father like everyone. However...”

Cutting her words at once, Lisha looked downward,

“I...”

In a choked voice and moved to tears.

“I wanted him to save me.”

“.....”

“I wanted him to choose not the country, but me... I'm a hopeless person, right? I, who was captured, was so scared that I couldn't even commit suicide. That's why I'm not the New Kingdom Princess and don't have such qualifications to be.”

So that's why she hates to behave like a Princess, huh.

After all, it isn't anyone else, but herself who thinks that she is unqualified.

“Let's talk about the reason why I invited you.”

As she suddenly returned to the talk, Lux kept quiet.

“This is because Drag-Knights are all in this era. The investigation of the ruins, the turf war for resources with other countries, peace and sovereignty. Drag-Rides are involved in all of these. In a sense, it's good for the country that I become strong.”

“.....”

“Lux. I want to know who I am.”

Saying so, Lisha began to walk her way home which had become dark.

“My father was the hero who saved the people of this country. But, now I'm no one. So, I want to know it after becoming the strongest Drag-Knight. For that, I need your power. I will have you play an active role as my right hand in the "Knight Squadron". You have no objection, right? Chore Prince.”

“Objection...? haven't you already decided?”

“An able woman is also quick in decisions.”

Lisha laughed so proudly.

“First will be the platoon confrontation battle of the academy. After having won it — we will attend the next battle. It's the off-campus confrontation battle with the representatives of each country.”

“An off-campus, confrontation battle”

As Lux cocked his head in puzzlement at the unfamiliar words,

"Although you've been doing odd jobs in many places, don't you know the world situation? You did yesterday's lesson, right? About the investigation of ruins in each country and the struggle to obtain their rights—"

Currently in this New Kingdom, there are three crises where one did not know when they would occur.

The first crisis is the rebel army of the Old Empire troops that has been hiding after the coup d'état.

The second crisis is the existence of Abyss which occasionally appears from the ruins.

And the third crisis is the turf war with other countries regarding the research activity of the ruins themselves

"Although the New Kingdom was born, there are still the Old Empire's remnants remaining. They escaped into the neighboring countries which were supporting the Empire, getting cooperating organizations, and even now — aim at the recapture of the government by military power (force)."

"....."

In fact, there had been rumors that the rebel army of the Old Empire was superior in number than the regular army of the current New Kingdom.

However, they just haven't showed up these several years.

“Next is—, the problem of Abyss.”

The mysterious beasts which frequently appear from the ruins themselves or from their surroundings.

While knowing that various treasures were excavated from the ruins including the Drag-Rides, it was mainly because of the Abyss that the research of each nation did not readily progress.

As a result of having greedily forced an investigation of ruins, there were also precedents where nearby villages, towns and small nations themselves were destroyed in only one night by the Abyss which appeared.

All what was known was that as long as you destroyed the core inside the Abyss' body, you could kill them.

But, on top of the fact that it was accompanied with many dangers, one stood no chance against them with military power other than Drag-Rides.

Therefore, ancient weapons and resources were dug illegally by thieves; damaging the ruins, and moreover so that Abyss did not end up being summoned, the ruins discovered in the country were designated off-limits and strictly controlled.

"And—, thirdly is the turf war with other countries."

Every corner of the world was dotted with ruins and the countries who managed their lands were basically investigating them.

So as not to selfishly get into the ruins of another country, an agreement was established too.

However, if the weak carelessly advanced their investigation of the ruins, they might incur damage even to the surroundings countries by the Abyss' appearance.

Along the border, there were also ruins of places that were vague; whether it was the territory of which country including the sea area of distant places.

Therefore, one agreement was made and a mock battle of Drag-Knights in order to gain what should (could) be called "the ruins investigation right", was to be held in each country once every several months.

It was said that in one of them, there was also a tournament among fellows officer cadets.

“Then, until then...”

“Yes, by the confrontation battle which will begin two months later, I shall have gather the strongest unit. For that purpose, I expressly made you get in the academy, and tried to make you join the "Knight Squadron", but—”

Lisha got sulky.

“No, um... I understand your feelings and I'm glad that you're expecting a lot from me, but I'm good only at defense—”

“Let's practice the attack!”

He was sternly pointed at with a finger and scolded.

“To begin with, my attacks were avoided so much by you. If you acquire even the experience of attacking, you

should be recognized as a powerful and outstanding figure even by the "Knight Squadron" like I anticipated. And, um, as m-my first partner, someday—”

“Eh...?”

As Lux looked puzzled at Lisha who mumbled as her cheeks suddenly became red,

“F-For the time being, that's your task. As my escort, I will talk it over with the Principal whether you can have the same authority as the "Knight Squadron" as an exception.”

“Eeeh!?”

“You can't attack, but the existence value of a Drag-Knight who has never been defeated is enough. In short, it'll be good as long as you play an active role as my shield.”

“I-Isn't that a little cruel...”

In various meanings.

"—By the way, it's about your other Sword Device, but can you show it to me a little? If it's a good material, I would like to remodel it."

"Eeeeeeeh!?"

Looking at Lisha whose eyes suddenly brightened, Lux panicked.

"Hmm...? Is there something to be surprised with?"

"Errr? That is... Um, I was told by Her Majesty the Queen to strictly manage it, so..."

"What! You're stingy, eh. Can't you at least show it to me?"

Dissatisfied, Lisha pouted.

"In that case, I will go get permission from Her Majesty the Queen later. You should protect that sword well till then."

"Yes..."

Lux nodded with an evasive reply.

“What's the matter? You look pale. If you're tired, you should rest by somewhere—”

“No...”

“Then, it's good. Then, take care of me again, Lux.”

As they returned up to the academy's main gate, Lisha lightly tapped Lux's shoulders and left.

“.....”

Lux went to the drawing room of the academy with the same pace as when he was walking with lisha.

Originally, he was temporarily allowed to sleep in Philphie's room, but he wanted to stay at the drawing room only today without notice.

Rather than an ethical issue or personal reasons, Lux did not want to meet anyone now.

“I—. I'm hopeless...”

It was lightly self-loathing that he had lain down on the sofa.

Though on the spur of the moment, he was regretting having said those words to Lisha.

“I have no right to say that 'you should be more like a Princess' to her...”

To think that I want someone to do what I wasn't able to do.

(What have I ever done for the citizens in those days?)

What Lux had obtained five years ago was the title of Prince and several privileges.

He was thinking whether even the young him could not do something as a prince of a great Empire which lasted several hundred years.

And, the day of fate.

As the result of the fact that he himself personally moved—, the ideal which Lux painted as a Prince was smashed up.

Therefore, right.

As he became the chore Prince, Lux was saved for the first time.

The people of the town with whom he could not even get in touch with well until now.

Every place and every job.

With odd jobs for five years, he felt like having slightly gotten used to being a familiar existence.

He intended to be able to understand the words "for the people" that he had spoken.

(I'm selfish, eh...)

Why couldn't I understand the feelings of Lisha who couldn't behave like a Princess?

In the good point of having lost his position of Prince, this time he acted like a citizen and flattered the Princess.

He could not forgive such a side of himself.

Even so, Lisha said that she expected a lot from him.

Philphie said he was the same as in the old days.

Other students also accepted him.

I want to become everyone's power, but — the current me can't use that sword.

But,

(I — at that time)

A languid fatigue attacked Lux.

And Lux quietly closed his eyes.

Part 9

Sparks fluttered down from the sky.

The imperial castle of the Acadia Empire.

Inside the castle where the war was over.

A great number of soldiers' corpses were piled up, and while a flow of blood streamed down the floor like a muddy stream, Lux was walking dragging his feet.

Where he arrived at was the audience room which was fiercely destroyed.

In front of the throne, the emperor was lying on the floor.

His chest was very deeply pierced by a sword, and he died like that with his eyes wide opened.

“Oh dear, so you were alive. As expected of you, little brother.”

Beside him, a young man smeared with blood spurts was laughing.

An innocent, pure smile like a child.

“How..., why...?”

Within a hazy consciousness and putting strength in his legs which were likely to collapse at any moment, Lux asked.

Immediately after, he strongly coughed and finally vomited a clot of blood.

"Kukukuku. As expected of you, little brother. To be able to use that Drag-Ride until you vomit blood—, I want even this gutless emperor to follow your example in the netherworld."

Saying so, the man kicked the face of the motionless emperor.

"Why, did you, kill him...?"

"What?"

To Lux's voice which got blurred, the man cocked his head in puzzlement.

"The Drag-Knights, of the, army, as well, as His Majesty the Emperor, everyone,... This is, from the plan––"

"Ku, hahahaha! Hahahaha! Hahahaha! Hahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahaha!"

The man laughed loudly.

And after suddenly opening his eyes wide, he glared at Lux.

“I was saved the trouble thanks to you. I never thought that you would be going so far. Thanks to you, this easily advanced farther than what I planned. If you were done without being able to properly defeat the army, I would have had no choice but to call the Abyss using the "flute".”

Taking out a golden flute never seen before from his breast pocket, the man laughed.

“If I called a large quantity of Abyss, it would be easy to destroy this country, but the cleaning up afterwards would be troublesome. You save me the trouble. Goddamn Prince.”

“Kahah...!”

Lux once again vomitted blood and fell on the floor.

He could not stand up anymore...

As if blood disappeared from his whole body, he grew weak.

The sensation of certain death wrapped Lux's whole body.

“But, you deserve respect. At this age, you manage Machine Dragons better than anyone else, and without using trickery, you fought to put an end to the history of this rotten Empire. By using me and borrowing Count Atismata's strength, you wonderfully destroyed this country. You're splendid, little brother! I praise your bottomless resolve and pride, and your talent!”

Fugil raised his voice and looked down at Lux.

“But — you had no luck. You have been betrayed by me whom you trusted. Let me tell you something in the end, little brother. I wasn't a Prince of this Empire from the beginning.”

Devil like words were spitted out from the man's mouth.

“My purpose isn't the peace that you desired. Good work for destroying the Empire. Prince.”

Laughing with a frivolous voice, the face of the man who opened his eyes wide was reflected in Lux's pupils.

“Why...?”

“Let's see — shall I tell you, little brother. The reason why you weren't able to achieve your ideal.”

The voice of a big brother which suddenly regained his composure and came to his senses reached Lux's ears.

“You know nothing of the world. You are not in the caliber of kings. The weakest.”

Lux's memory was interrupted at that last conversation.

It was a morning seven days after losing consciousness , and wandering about life and death that he woke up.

Meanwhile, all was over.

The defeat of the imperial army.

The approximately 1200 Drag-Knights who participated in the battle were killed in action.

The ideal end to which Lux believed in was nowhere.

Part 10

"Ngh..."

Lux woke up on the sofa of the drawing room.

Before he knew, a blanket was put on his body.

On the other side of the window with the curtains opened, one could see the eastern sky which has became white.

It was dawn.

(I should go back to the room to get a uniform change...)

When Lux thought so and was going to get up,

"—Uwaaaaah!?"

Noticing a girl sitting face to face with him, Lux unintentionally shouted.

Krulcifer Einvolk.

The girl who was beautiful like a fairy was staring at Lux with her usual cool face.

“It' still early morning. Although it isn't the girl's dormitory, I don't think it's a good idea to shout too much.”

Smoothly brushing up her hair, Krulcifer said.

“Besides, it's also vexing when you scream as if you've seen a ghost.”

“Ah, s-sorry... Um, The reason why I screamed is because I had a dream, so—”

“You're quite honest. I'm joking, so don't worry.”

Krulcifer's mouth made an arc as she smiled.

She was usually a girl with a grown-up, cool impression, but that smile was lovely for a girl her age.

“U-Um..., why is Krulcifer-san here?”

As Lux asked so regarding their encounter in an unexpected place,

“Want to hear it?”

“.....”

She returned a mysterious smile which somewhere had an implication.

Catching sight of her long legs which peeped out from the skirt of her uniform for an instant, Lux's heart throbbed.

“Don't worry. Since, I don’t have an indecent goal like fantasizing about you.”

“I haven't said anything yet, right!?”

“Sorry for not being able to meet your expectations.”

“Like I said, I didn't think that!?”

“Is that so. So it's an optical illusion of my eyes that your face looks red, huh.”

“A-Anyone can become like that! If a beautiful person like Krulcifer-san is in the same room as you when you get up—”

"....."

Krulcifer who heard this, after being bewildered for a moment, kept silent for a while,

"It isn't like this place is your private room."

"...Eh?"

She suddenly returned to a serious look and said so.

"As for the reason why I came here. Occasionally, I slipped out of the dormitory to pass time. It just so happens that today it was in this drawing room that I came to. And then, you were sleeping here. That's all."

Saying so, Krulcifer with her good posture sitting on the sofa as such, softly turned her gaze to the window.

Her profile was so lovely, like a painting, such that Lux could not help being fascinated (by it?).

"Do you think that it's a lie?"

Suddenly, her thin lips opened and words came out.

Lux calmly shook his head at her question,

"No. After all, I occasionally want to do so, too. It's also so when I'm alone, just look up at the starry sky and do odd jobs."

"You're quite the romanticist. Is what I would like to say, but..., you're careless. If I was an assassin who has a grudge toward the Empire, you would have been killed long ago."

"Oh, haha..."

Lux returned a wry smile.

On that point, he should have had the habit of properly locking the door and lightly sleeping, but for some reason, he seemed to have been careless recently.

"Speaking of which, Krulcifer-san can also use a Divine Drag-Ride, right?"

"If I only hold onto it and doesn't use it, it will be a useless possession. After all, I can't fight here and I have no interest in that anyway."

Saying so, Krulcifer dropped her gaze to the Sword Device hung at her waist.

“What do you mean by having no interest?”

“It means that I don't want to fight. Long ago, I tried hard and fought for someone precious to me—. And I got my hands on the Divine Drag-Ride <Fafnir>. But, at a certain time, I have lost all reasons to fight.”

“By that...”

What do you mean?

Lux was going to ask so, but he reflexively hesitated.

The pain of having lost something important.

It was because he thought that it was not a good thing to ask out of curiosity.

“There is only one truth which remains in me. One of the keys to figure it is the "Black Hero". So I — chase after it.”

“.....”

“Hey, I want to ask you something.”

- thumb*, the moment he heard that, Lux's breath stopped.

Those eyes.

Countless Machine Dragons shot down.

The flow of a large quantity of blood overflowing from the gap of the broken floor.

The First Prince who betrayed him, Fugil.

That black Machine Dragon—

- gooonnng*

Suddenly, from the clock tower of the first block, they heard a big bell.

“This sound is…!?”

A sound which was not a tone to tell the time and which rang violently.

It was the alarm to warn of an enemy attack.

“Don't tell me—!?”

"...I'll go ahead."

Running after Krulcifer who quickly moved, Lux also came out to the corridor.

And, he ran to the sharing room where Philphie slept.

Episode 7 - The Weakest Drag-Knight

Part 1

In the fort city of the country of morning glow, the bell ’s sound which conveyed caution and Machine Dragons' roaring were resounding.

Several Drag-Knights were flying all over the town in order to inform of the Abyss's attack.

In the school, the emergency meeting which gathered the instructors and top brass of the city was held immediately.

Meanwhile, Lux and the officer cadets received orders to wear their Dress Gear and stand by, they had gathered in the Machine Dragon Hangar.

Fort City Cross Feed, the Fourth Machine Dragon Hangar.

That building which was located in the school premises was wide in itself; it was a shelter with bulky stone walls as well as a depository of Drag-Rides before transfer.

It was said in case of emergency, that this place was the waiting place and could also become an evacuation site.

“Well then, as everyone gathered, I shall notify you, ladies and gentlemen officer cadets.”

The reason of the alarm bell was due to the appearance of Abyss.

According to the report of Drag-Knight scouts, the kind was a large-sized one.

The place of emergence was estimated to be the ruins in the south west, and the appearance time was late at night.

There was talk about the fact that between the Fort City and the ruins, three strongholds existed, but the security network around the ruins and the first stronghold were already broken through, and the situation was urgent.

“Currently, we are being stationed in the second and third strongholds and several Drag-Knights of the district defense unit are heading to the subjugation. But, the enemy is a large-sized one. In preparation for the

possibility that it breaks through and damage extends to the Fort City, We will also form an interception unit and prepare for battle. Get ready and stay on alert while waiting for orders."

In an unusually serious voice, instructor Raigree explained so and ended the talk.

There was the explanation that a reinforcement demand had already been sent to the Capital.

Some female students sighed in relief after hearing that, but—

"They really are a bunch of peace idiots, eh. The young ladies of this academy."

"Eh...?"

To the mutter of Krulcifer who was standing alongside the wall of the hangar, Lux unintentionally asked back.

"They shouldn't expect reinforcements from the Capital so easily."

"What do you mean? Everyone who is here are officer cadets, right? Unless the Drag-Knights of the army from the Capital come—"

"Your voice is too loud, Lux-kun."

Sharis who came around suddenly put her index finger on his mouth and smiled wryly.

"Just to note, you're a former Prince and a Drag-Knight. I thought you knew the circumstances on that point about this country's military situation."

"To put it simply, there is a lack of manpower. That's the practical problem."

Tillfarr who was on the side supplemented so while shrugging her shoulders.

"Yes. Even you should know that this isn't an ordinary city."

And as Nokuto added, she slowly walked towards the door going outside.

"Where do you intend to go?"

"We are of the "Knight Squadron". So we should proactively take the initiative in case of emergency. Those living in this place certainly have some benefits; but there are always ups and downs."

Now that the Drag-Knights of the army were almost all out, there was military power which could oppose the Abyss.

Sharis returned a smile and the three girls went out as such.

They would probably wear their Machine Dragons in the practice field and head to the subjugation of the Abyss.

"Well then, Lux. I'm going."

Coming to pat his shoulder with her hand was Lisha wearing a Dress Gear.

The attack of a large-sized Abyss.

In spite of the tense situation, Lisha's expression showed no signs of tension.

"Please, be careful."

"I'll be all right. I'm strong after all. However, it's regrettable that you can't accompany me. Even though I intended to use this opportunity to teach you how to attack."

Lisha showed a smile as if her depression from yesterday had never existed.

She should be all right at this rate.

Lux felt relieved and saw off Lisha.

Upon close inspection, from within the hangar, most of the members of the "Knight Squadron" were not there.

Only Philphie who could use a Divine Drag-Ride seemed to remain for the defense of the Fort City, almost all the others seemed to have sortied for the Abyss subjugation.

Lux was at a loose end since familiar faces temporarily disappeared.

As he turned his gaze to the vicinity, the face of Krulcifer who was leaning her back on the wall could be seen.

"Krulcifer-san, even though you're of the "Knight Squadron", you didn't go for the subjugation?"

As Lux stepped up and asked so,

"For overseas students from foreign countries like me, an original battle standard is established by the school regulations."

She plainly answered with her expression which did not change at all.

"I have no obligation to be involved in a direct battle with the Abyss. Otherwise, I can at least cooperate with other forms of support, such as information transfer and goods supply beyond the scope of danger to my life. I can help if I want, but a complain will come from my country, so I don't intend to do so."

Krulcifer was an overseas student from Ymir, a large country in the north.

If learning the technology and knowledge of Machine Dragons was the purpose, to take the initiative, and fight in the crisis of other countries and lose their life would be the most unreasonable.

In other words, it meant that the “Knight Squadron” led by Lisha would be exposed to danger.

“.....”

As Lux was at a loss for words to that fact,

“You don’t really need to worry about it.”

“Eh...?”

“We aren’t people who should fight now. It’s natural that even such situation happens. You’re a general student who hasn’t even joined the “Knight Squadron”. So, there's no need to be concerned about being unable to fight. You should just obey the directives of the instructor.”

“.....”

Lux could not answer anything.

“Nii-san. You mustn’t go.”

As Lux was separated from the crowd, Airi came over in front of him.

"With that <Wyvern>, you can't attack and you can't use the other sword. There is nothing that your current self can do, Nii-san. If it's Lisha-sama and the "Knight Squadron" who are there, they can defeat even a large-sized Abyss. So—"

"I know. I know, but…"

Lux spoke ambiguously while nodding.

The military power of the "Knight Squadron" was reduced to half, by the fact that the third-year students who accounted for half the number of the members, had gone to the Capital for practice.

Even so, about ten Drag-Knights were strength enough to be able to find a chance of victory against a large-sized Abyss.

But, something seemed awry.

He remembered that Abyss which attacked them at the time of the duel with Lisha a few days ago.

For Abyss which appearance rate was always low, two appeared in this short period of time.

When Lux had guarded the ruins of the frontier before as an odd job, Abyss appeared only once a month.

Of course, there was also the possibility of coincidence, but—

"Is there anything bothering you? From now, I plan to only see the situation from a distant position, but—"

"No…"

"Then, I'm going."

"Please, be careful."

As Krulcifer got up to leave, Lux began to walk slowly in the hangar. In order to look for unknown questions and answers.

Part 2

A very spacious wasteland about 3km away from the Fort City.

At one time, it was covered with a carpet of grasslands and there were several villages and settlements, but due to the influence of ruins and Abyss which appeared more

than ten years ago, all these were destroyed and there was only abandoned wreckage.

The first stronghold which was the closest to the ruins, and the second stronghold had already been broken through.

It was said that the guard troops of the Kingdom army that could fight, was in the middle of gathering neighbouring soldiers and reorganizing.

Stopping the Abyss heading to the Fort City would depend on the “Knight Squadron”’s activity.

“Is this thing — that Abyss?”

From the ground and the sky about 200 miles away from the target, about ten members of the “Knight Squadron” confirmed the Abyss.

It had no legs. From its trapezoidal large build like jelly, two arms like spires stretched left and right, and two purple spheres like eyeballs were floating inside the body close to the top of the head.

It was just that much a creature.

A Slime type said to have almost no intelligence.

However, that Abyss, a large-sized one as the report said, boasted of an extraordinary large build which could swallow a castle.

In the inner part of its translucent body, a slightly dark red sphere — the thing called the core could be seen.

And the frightening thing was that castle like large build was moving.

It looked like the speed of the degree which a child runs at, but considering its huge size, it was too fast.

The question now was how they should conquer it—

"Okay, I will fire."

Lisha who was left the command suddenly set up her Breath Gun with a smile.

It loaded energy from the Force Core to the cannon.

The main weapon of the <Chimeric Wyvern> took aim at the Abyss' core.

"Are you going to shoot all of sudden!?"

One member of the "Knight Squadron" that was behind her shouted so as she was frightened.

"It won't begin unless I try, right? Here I go!"

Lisha, showing no signs of being scared pulled the trigger of the cannon.

- boom*, the huge light pillar which was released hit the slime's abdomen.

"Goboh… Gubaaah!"

Immediately after, the shock dashed across the Abyss' body surface.

And *splash*, its mucus scattered.

"…!?"

Since they took enough distance, the mucus did not reach the "Knight Squadron".

But, the mucus which scattered to the ground fell onto the grass and melted it in no time.

The third-year student Sharis who saw that called out to the whole “Knight Squadron” using voice dragon.

『If you touch its body, you’ll turn out like that. It looks like we can't count on the Machine Dragon's barrier that much.

『Yes. It would be best for us to avoid close combat. I think we should all prepare our shooting armaments. Lizsharte-sama.

Nokuto asked for instructions.

But, before Lisha could answer,

“Hey!? More importantly, look at that!?”

Tillfarr in a panicked voice pointed at one point with the blade in her hand.

There, a shadow—,

“Gopoh, Gopopopoh…”

Without caring about Lisha’s bombardment, the Abyss continued its advance.

No, it reacted to the attack and increased its movement speed.

Climbing over the third stronghold which was before it, it was imminently approaching the last defense point – – the rampart of the Fort City second block.

“The bombardment didn’t work…?”

Among the general-purpose Machine Dragons that posseses a Breath Gun, the <Chimeric Wyvern> used one which had the highest power.

However, the bombardment only flipped a part of the body surface it didn't touch the core at all.

Even the holes pierced on its body were filled by the surrounding body fluids, and it regenerated in less than ten seconds.

“Tch… It looks like that big thing’s body is made of troublesome mucus. It seems to scatter the Breath Gun’s power by conveying the impact and heat on the whole surrounding body fluids”

Lisha, though subtly clicking her tongue, kept her calm.

"So, what's the strategy? Commander."

To the question of Sharis who was staying in the air nearby, Lisha snorted,

『It's obvious. Simultaneous shootings while aiming at the core. Everyone, take a distance of 200 miles and load to the maximum. The power will fall if you're too far. I'll do the countdown. Understood?

As she also called out to the "Knight Squadron" above ground using the dragon voice, Lisha let the energy fill her own cannon.

(With this, we can surely defeat it. It's our win.)

Lisha was convinced of her victory.

A concentrated fire (barrage) released by a dozen Drag-Knights.

Based on the previous bombardment, as long as she confirmed the situation of the body fluids scattering, this power should be able to go through.

"I'll begin the countdown. We all shot at zero… 5, 4, 3 …"

Following Lisha's orders, all the machines set up their cannons loaded to the maximum.

—Iiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii!

"2, 1, sho—"

At that time. The strange sound of a flute resounded from somewhere in the neighbourhood.

(Where is this sound? From the rear of the Abyss—)

When Lizsharte thought so in the corner of her head, the shock of the salvo shook the atmosphere.

At the same time, something unusual occurred to the Abyss before their eyes.

"What…!?"

The dark red core inside the body that they were aiming at.

It suddenly swelled like foam filled with wreckage.

“Goaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

Immediately after, before the bombardment hit, the Abyss burst itself.

The explosion of the core.

High heat and impact which far exceeded expectations painted out the field vision and surged.

『Deploy a barrier! Use also the Machine Dragon roar!

Lisha’s shout was drowned out by a roaring sound and disappeared.

Part 3

“Huh…?”

As Lux was aimlessly walking inside the Machine Dragon hangar, on the other side of an opened door there was a staircase leading to the basement.

"There was such a place, huh…?"

Lux's feet naturally headed to the basement.

As he quietly opened the door within reach, there — Philphie was there.

His childhood friend who was a user of a Divine Drag-Ride was sitting on a small chair, absent minded as usual.

"…Philphie?"

She was a girl with an usually mysterious impression, but Lux felt a strange presence and called out to her.

"……"

But — there was no response.

Something was strange.

As if she did not hear Lux's voice since the beginning.

"I can hear, a sound."

However, staring at one point of the wall as such, Philphie said.

"A sound?"

When Lux asked so,

"A sound."

Philphie muttered as she repeated.

Lux's ears could not hear anything.

But,

"I can hear the sound of a flute… from the other side."

"…!?"

- badump*

To her words spat out absent mindedly, Lux's heart bounced.

『After all, If you were done without being able to properly defeat the army, I would have had no choice but to call the Abyss using the "flute".

The tone of the flute.

The Abyss' sudden attack during the duel with Lisha.

The timing of the third-year students of the "Knight Squadron" being away.

All the gears were linked; one answer was born.

"Don't tell me—"

- Dooong*!

Suddenly, a vibration like the ground rumbling shook the hangar.

"…I'll go check out the situation. Philphie."

"Yes. Please, Lu-chan." With only her voice, Philphie saw off Lux who left the basement with a serious face.

"Go help, in my stead—"

She muttered so at the end with a hollow expression.

Part 4

The military unit “Knight Squadron” which was fighting the Abyss fell into a partial destroyed state.

“Ku, aah…!”

“U…ku, ah…!”

With the sound of acid burning, several Machine Dragons’ armors melted.

There were also many members who switched from cannon or blade, which they had in hand, to a shield; their armaments had already become unusable.

Even the Drag-Knights who were flying were blown away due to the shock of the explosion, and all of them were dropped on the ground.

"…Kuh! To all machines of the "Knight Squadron" platoon, evacuate! We will rebuild our posture once again. Those who can't use any weapons, step back for the moment!"

The failure of the planned attack.

And knitting her brows at the reality of there being great damage, Lisha groaned.

"We can still fully fight! Don't panic!"

Calling out so to her comrades, she tried to raise their willpower.

But,

『Hou, you've really gotten used to acting like a Princess, eh, Lizsharte.

"…!?"

Suddenly, through dragon voice somewhere — a man's voice which became hoarse could be heard.

It was not a member of the "Knight Squadron".

It was a Drag-Knight attached to the defense corps of the New Kingdom army that had chased after the Abyss which broke through the strongholds.

A man wearing a gray Machine Dragon and standing still in the sky, at the rear of the Abyss which charged could be seen.

『But you know? You aren't of such caliber.

"You bastard, what are you saying—…!?"

Immediately after her words, a flash bombardment was released by that Drag-Knight towards Lisha.

『Commander!

『Princess!

The screams of the Knight Squadron echoed on the dragon voice communication.

"Kuh…!"

It was at a timing where she was completely taken back, but Lisha barely evaded a direct hit.

But, the bombardment which grazed broke the armor and she fell over sideways on the ground with the < Chimeric Wyvern>.

『Uh… Kuh! What the hell are you trying do…!? Captain of the guard corps deployed from the Royal Capital—

Lisha glared at the Drag-Knight standing still in the sky and shouted so.

In response, the man in his prime, serenely,

『You are mistaken.

Declared so as if ridiculing her.

『It's from the Imperial Capital[6] that I came, Your Highness Princess Lizsharte. Acadia Empire, Imperial Guards Knight Squadron Chief, Velvet Barth is my name.』

『…!?

To the polite voice heard through the dragon voice, all of the “Knight Squadron” members present gasped in surprise.

After the Old Empire was destroyed by the coup d’état .

The Drag-Knights survivors which were on the Empire side were once put in jail as war criminals.

However, those who pledged allegiance to the New Kingdom and were proven their innocence became once again officers as the New Kingdom’s Drag-Knights, but– –

Hearing the lines “I came from the Imperial capital”, Lisha guessed the man’s identity.

An enemy of this country.

The rebel army which was scheming the restoration of the Old Empire, and the man who carried that will in his body.

"So you betrayed the New Kingdom? And you even went as far as to expressly pull an Abyss from the ruins––"

『Do not say a disgraceful thing like betraying. I got back on the right track. I obtained power.

The voice of a man who was elated with success could be heard in the head through the dragon voice.

『Did you think that you could beat me with one surprise attack? Your arrogance will cause your loss, Velvet.

Being shot on the flight device, Lisha calmly set up.

Velvet who also saw that had a composed expression.

『I can win. After all, luring you out like this was also to create a chance for victory.

The gray Drag-Ride got down from the sky.

Strengthened Flight Type Machine Dragon <EX Wyvern> where there was the Old Empire's army symbol on the coating.

The guard squad commander Velvet picked up a small golden flute in front of the Abyss which fell in the mud.

『Now, hatch out. Eggs.

And, he put his mouth on the flute with a cruel smile.

A never heard before harsh dissonance resounded on the rough earth.

Just after.

On the surface of the Abyss which had exploded and crumbled down in the mud, countless oil slicks bubblingly floated.

The small bubbles pimply increased in size at a high speed and popped off all at once.

“That is—!?”

The members of the “Knight Squadron” stared wide-eyed in surprise.

What came out were birdmen of black metal.

A herd of Gargoyles like the one which attacked the academy a few days ago.

There were born from the Abyss' body.

『O-Ohé, ohé…

『Such a number…! Even though we have never fought more than two Abysses at the same time…

『What do we do…, I haven't heard about this—

『In the first place, to think that the garrison in the army were enemies …

Multiple voices overlapped in the dragon voice's line.

Giant bubbles of despair were born and burst.

- puff*
- puff**puff*
- puff**puff**puff**puff*…

Black metal wings gradually covered the sky of the morning glow from which the day began to rise.

There were about 30 Gargoyle Type Abysses.

An enemy force of more than about 120 machines in terms of full-fledged Drag-Knights was born in that place .

“—Awaken, Founding Ancestor. King of the Dragon Gods that is an Army in itself. <Tiamat>!”

Lisha cancelled the connection of the damaged < Chimeric Wyvern> and wore her Divine Drag-Ride < Tiamat>.

However,

『Lisha-sama! Please, prepare for withdrawal! A fight with this level of military power is dangerous!

One member of the Knight Squadron shouted so through the dragon voice communication, but Lisha gave her head a small shake.

『Sorry, but it seems to be impossible. The enemy has wings. Even if we run away into the Fort City, they will fly over the wall. We have no choice but to fight them here.

『B-But—. We will gain time, so at least Lisha-sama must escape! You who is the Princess cannot die here. Also for the sake of the people of the New Kingdom which finally obtained peace.

Moreover, another member shouted as to urge her.

But—,

『Do you mean — surviving is also a Princess' duty?

Lisha's wry smile came back through the dragon voice.

『Then, I'm not fit to be a Princess after all.

With these lines, she lonely turned around.

『It's bothersome, I'm not good at it. At surviving by sacrificing someone, extolling someone's death as heroic, doing at least one speech to the citizens who survived and being exposed to applause.

『……

『That's why I will fight. It's surely the mission which I can do as a Princess.

As soon as she asserted this, Lisha's <Tiamat> flew.

『Tell all the Knight Squadron's members, from here on we will engage the enemy. Those unable to fight as well as the injured should take shelter within the walls. The members who can fight, cover me. Go down a little to not be hit by the <Airborne Fortress Legion>.』

『Lizsharte-sama…

Even the "Knight Squadron"'s members who felt her resolution in her tone regained their calm naturally.

『Nokuto. You return to the Fort City, explain about this situation to the academy and ask for orders; can you do it?

『Yes. Roger.

Immediately after her answer, Nokuto's <Drake> glided towards Cross Feed.

At the same time, the members of the “Knight Squadron” set up their remaining armaments all at once.

“Now, let’s play. Traitors.”

Wielding her Sword Device, Lisha summoned her auxiliary armaments.

Twelve more <Airborne Fortress (Legion)> and the ultra-fired gun <Seven-Headed Dragon (Seventh Heads)>.

“That’s quite a foolish mouth you have, Princess.”

The defense squad Commander Velvet twisted his mouth in an arc, and once again pushed his lips to the flute.

Part 5

“—That’s all, but I will confirm by sight from a long distance, the current war situation that I heard through dragon voice from Nokuto-san.”

The students staying on standby fell silent to the fact which Krulcifer brought back with the speed of her Divine Drag-Ride <Fafnir>.

“Withdraw from Cross Feed? Or fight back? It was necessary to decide this. The enemy was already closing in right now after all.”

“Understood. I thank you for your cooperation. Krulcifer.”

At the same time as instructor Raigree answered, a heavy silence filled the Machine Dragon Hangar.

Having brought the Abysses was a man of the rebel army, who was the defense squad commander and somebody that inherited the will of the Old Empire.

The biggest military power of the Fort City at present, the “Knight Squadron” was on the verge of annihilation.

With that fact being thrusted at them, the female officer cadet students were at a loss for words.

“……”

Meanwhile, Lux was about to go out of the hangar.

In front of the door heading to the outside, Airi was standing there with a worried expression.

“Where do you intend to go? Nii-san.”

Airi asked Lux who had an expression showing that he had already made up his mind.

With an obstinate expression which muffled something.

“I' am going to help Lisha-sama.”

“You can’t!”

Airi flatly told so.

“With that <Wyvern>, even if you can defend, you can ’t defeat the Abyss; you also can't use the other sword. There's nothing that the current you can do, Nii-san.”

“But—”

“I understand Nii-san’s feelings. But, in this world, there are things which can’t be help. No matter how

much you do your best, there are many things which can't be reversed. We, the Old Empire's royalty should have seen it as unpleasant it was!"

Throwing off her usually clear expression, Airi appealed to him.

Lux knew what she meant by that.

"Weren't we fighting for justice? Don't forget our purpose. Do you plan to die here? Please. For this country, we—"

"You're wrong, Airi."

Lux interrupted Airi's words and suddenly smiled.

"My purpose is to defeat the Empire. It's to defeat the enemy who takes important people away from me."

"……"

"I'll be all right, Airi. I won't leave you alone, so—"

Airi calmly looked downward to these words.

“I 've already finished the output adjustment of that Machine Dragon. It has to the bitter end been analyzed by me who's still studying, but… I cannot guarantee more than ten minutes…”

“Thank you.”

As Lux smiled at his little sister, he approached Krulcifer who was outside the door.

“Krulcifer-san. I have a request.”

“…What is it?”

“Please activate your <Fafnir>. Not to cover me, but to save Lisha-sama. You are the only person who can go out of the Fort City right now.”

As Lux turned straight eyes <--[need to fix] and said so ,

“Didn’t I say it before? I cannot go fight using this life that belongs to the religious country Ymir.”

Krulcifer told so in a calm tone until the bitter end.

But—,

“I know the identity of the “Black Hero”. Let’s make a deal. I'll tell you if you listen to my request.”

“……”

One could clearly feel even without seeing that Airi had turned her gaze away from Lux.

“All right.”

Krulcifer nodded after a short pause.

“Then, let’s go.”

And, the two people unsheathed their Sword Devices at the same time.

Part 6

A mortal combat was unfolding in the battlefield of the wasteland.

30 metallic flying type Abysses; the Gargoyles' fierce attack.

And for some reason, the defense squad commander Velvet who wasn't attacked by the Abysses, was looking at that hell from the rear like a commander.

Was it the power of the flute which he holds in his hand? It looked like he commanded the Abysses and controlled their movements.

"Kuh…! Haah!"

Lisha roughened her breathing and put strength to all parts of her limbs.

She perturbed the opponents with a total of 16 <Airborne Fortress Legion>, blocked their movements with the Divine Raiment <Heavenly Voice>, Gravity Control, and surely consigned them to oblivion with the maximum bombardment of the <Seven-Headed Dragon Seventh Heads> at last.

An extreme battle which fully used the three major armaments of the Divine Drag-Ride <Tiamat>.

She performed an attack with output beyond the limit consecutively and the Knight Squadron's members who covered her were also making frantic efforts, but they were still outnumbered.

Even so, without loosening the offensive, she continued to reduce the enemies' number little by little, but—,

"Kuh… Haa!"

Finally, the limit which couldn't be extended with just feelings was approaching.

Her vision grew hazy and her hands and feet no longer did what she wanted.

"Haa…, Haa…!"

There was about a dozen of Gargoyle type Abysses remaining.

Of course, even if only one was remaining, it was not an opponent to which you could let your guard down, but finally the chance of being able to execute the last plan came.

"Sharis, Tillfarr…, are you safe?"

Narrowing down the dragon voice to only the "Knight Squadron"' members, Lisha called out to them.

『…I'm sorry, but Princess, I was saved by a comrade and have already begun to withdraw.

『Yes, it looks like I'm also at my limit… My armaments have been blown off along with the armor of both my hands—

To the reply with a voice which got husky, Lisha smiled wryly.

She was rather thankful to her friends who fought with her in the middle of an overwhelming force difference.

『You guys should withdraw. Instead, I have a request . Tell the instructors who are in the Fort City to come out to attack. If my aim from now on succeeds, that is.

『Princess. Don't tell me it's…?

Sharis guessed Lisha's intention.

『Yes, I'm — going to aim at the boss who possesses that flute.

It was recorded that Abysses originally had the habit of attacking living things indiscriminately.

Nevertheless, that defense squad captain Velvet who sided with the Old Empire, far from being attacked, showed no signs that he could get caught up by their attacks.

And, the golden flute which the man possessed was not a Drag-Ride's armament.

It was probably a treasure of the ruins, and he was manipulating the Abysses using it.

In short, if she could even do something about that flute, or if she defeated even Velvet, it was likely that the Abysses would lose control.

She couldn't do it until now as the numbers were too much, but her chance had finally come.

"—How unsightly, Lizsharte. Originally, it was a mistake in the first place that the likes of a bitch like you, who must have lived waiting upon a man even if for a while, to seat on the seat of Princess."

Velvet who was staying in the air behind the Abysses was looking down at Lisha with a smile of mockery-

"Hmm. So that's to say, men are fellows like you who act conceited and make up repetitive excuses after it's over? And yet, they can only say things when they are in an absolutely advantageous situation, huh. I see; then it's natural that the Empire has been destroyed by we, the women."

"…You've some nerve. No, I shall give praise for that remarkable bluff. Even though you're exhausted to the extent that the Divine Drag-Ride which you wear has already begun its rampage."

As Velvet sneered at her, he put his lips on the flute and sent a breath.

A strange noise that was hard to describe resounded, and the Abysses came back behind Velvet all at once.

"As you wish. I'll ride on the one-to-one fight that you desire. I shall give a glorious death in battle to you."

Setting up a large-sized blade in a overhead position, Velvet declare so.

"What a funny joke. It will only be a shame even if my life was taken by a small thing like you."

As Lisha returned a smile to that, she pulled a small blade and flew up.

Divine Drag-Ride <Tiamat> vs. Strengthened Flying Type Machine Dragon <EX Wyvern>.

If the users' technique, stamina and equipment were equivalent, <Tiamat> was an advantageous combination in a difference of air frame performance, but now it was different.

Lisha accumulated fatigue to the extent of vomiting blood and her armor was also crumbly.

Her special abilities — not only weren't there the < Heavenly Voice> Divine Raiment, there were also neither

the strength to operate the <Airborne Legion Fortress> nor the spare energy to perform a bombardment with the < Seven-Headed Seventh Heads Dragon>.

It was even difficult to fly straight to where Velvet was , who was waiting in the sky.

If it was a one-on-one fight, the result could be seen.

The enemy was also confident about it.

Precisely because of this reason—, there was a chance of victory

“Come on, you should scatter that life! False princess!”

The moment when the energy from the Force Core streamed down Velvet’s large sword.

Lisha threw her set-up blade before his eyes.

“—!?”

The throwing of the small sword. At the same time, < Tiamat> which was rising suddenly stopped.

It wasn't limited to just Drag-Knights, if you lose your weapon in a battlefield, it will lead to an immediate death.

Velvet cut off the blade which was thrown with his large sword swung downward.

“Fool, did you think that such a move would work?”

There were no substitute weapons in Lisha’s hands.

The fight was decided.

“Haha. It’s you who made a mistake.”

Lisha’s small laughter reached the ears of Velvet who was facing her.

Her hands were holding slender twin swords.

The two Swords Devices corresponding to the < Chimeric Wyvern>.

Once one wore a Machine Dragon, the Sword Device could only be used as a control stick.

If the Sword Device to control the Machine Dragon was taken away or destroyed, one's defeat was decided.

Aside of using it that way, it was for self-defense before wearing a Machine Dragon, it could not be used as weapon after wearing the machine.

Thus originally, it was an attack which could not be predicted.

If it was a Sword Device where the Force Core was used in a part of the sword blade, one could also break through the barrier of a Drag-Ride.

Velvet had completely exposed an opening immediately after shaking off his large sword.

(Got you!)

The moment when Lisha wielded her twin swords with conviction,

"It's a shame, bitch."

"Wha—!?"

Lisha's senses became dull as if time stopped.

As if the flow of time which she felt slipped through her recognition.

- dong*

Velvet's large sword was swung first.

The fragment of the armor scattered before Lisha's eyes.

In the blue sky where the sun rose, one red flower bloomed.

"Ku, ah…!"

The twin swords being flipped, Lisha who had a part of her armor broken fell on the ground.

As if seeking something, she stretched out her right hand to the sky and suddenly ran out of energy as such.

『Lisha-sama!

A member of the "Knight Squadron" that was preparing for withdrawal screamed.

But — it was no use.

The dozen of Abysses which had been on standby quickly moved and stood in the way, as they formed a wall between Lisha and the “Knight Squadron”.

“Ha! Hahahahaha!”

Velvet’s sneer resounded in the wasteland and the sky.

“W-What… is this…?”

Hearing Lisha’s groan, Velvet fearlessly smiled.

“Quick Draw”—. It’s a kind of Drag-Knight secret art once handed down to the Empire's army. After reaching the Imperial Guardsman Knight Squadron's head, and after five more years of training — I finally mastered it.”

“Quick Draw”

A mind control operation in addition to the body control operation.

A special move that dishes out unseen attacks with just one stroke, in an instant, through a sequence of movements from the perfect overlap of manipulating two differing systems.

The Drag-Knights' three secret arts had been handed down as a legend even after the New Kingdom establishment, and a person who mastered even one of them was praised as a super first class user.

"I have been sharpening my fangs for this time for five years after the day of coup d'état. I endured the painful act of becoming the watchdog of you damn bitches. Hahahahahaha! It's the best feeling!"

"You low-life…!"

Lisha, still lying face up with her arms and legs outstretched, chewed her lower tip.

"With this, I've achieve my purpose. Afterwards, I'll hold you hostage and only use you as in a deal with the Queen."

Velvet played the flute and called back the Abysses behind him.

Lisha herself had no more cards to play.

"Kuh…"

She pulled the trigger with a fingertip as she struggled, but <Tiamat> no longer reacted.

(Finally, this time has come again…)

As her consciousness become cloudy due to fatigue and bleeding, Lisha suddenly heard a voice.

『Lisha-sama!

『—L-Lux…?

A dragon voice limited to only her could be heard through <Tiamat> which could no longer move.

Is it a dream, or an auditory hallucination?

Lisha though that either was fine if she could talk to him at the end.

『Haa… my bad. I've been defeated. Haha…

『Only a little more. Please stay conscious only a little more. If you do so—

『Forget about me, abandon me. You don't need to worry. It may be conceited, but you don't need to come help me, so…

Thanks to that, a small of amount of strength welled up within her.

『Instead, listen; keep my secret until the end—

Part 7

"… Like this, do you think that you won?"

While speaking with Lux through dragon voice, Lisha muttered so towards the enemy before her.

Her gaze was directed far backwards — behind Velvet standing stock still in the sky.

"Hou. What do you mean by that? Very interesting indeed."

"I haven't given up yet. I still have a way to defeat you ."

"Kuhahahaha! What a pathetic woman. I'm amazed beyond laughter. To think that you—"

Laughing so, Velvet looked back behind himself.

"I hope that you aren't thinking that those are reinforcements from the Capital."

"____"

The moment she heard that, the face of Lisha who was desperately keeping her consciousness turned pale.

Lisha who was lying down saw nearly 100 Machine Dragons from the other side of the wasteland — behind Velvet coming their way.

But—, all of them were gray.

The same color as the coating of the Old Empire from before — the rebel army!

"How foolish of you, Princess Lizsharte. No, just a slave who betrayed our Empire, right? That's your true identity—"

"…Kuh!?"

The moment she heard that, Lisha's voice was clogged.

The hand which was holding the Sword Device began to tremble with a clattering sound, and her crimson pupils shook.

"Hahaha! How nostalgic, young lady. That's right! It's me, Lizsharte. The one who put the mark of the Empire on your belly! To you who was abandoned by the Earl House, you had no value as a hostage. That's why I taught you how to use a Drag-Ride in order to make you live as an assassin…"

"Ku, a, aah…"

A soundless scream was squeezed out from Lisha's throat.

A scream of despair dyed in a bottomless darkness.

"But, the coup d'état succeeded and you, who was saved luckily, was declared Princess as if nothing ever happened. Your little sister who was left as the inheritor

died, and it became inconvenient, so another one was picked up. Kukuku, what a cruel country, eh. This New Kingdom."

Before she could say something, Velvet set up his large sword while ridiculing her.

The 100 Drag-Rides which rushed in as Velvet's reinforcements had already surrounded the area.

<Wyvern>, <Wyrm>, and <Drake>. A total of hundred machines of the three types of general-purpose Machine Dragons.

In addition, a dozen of Gargoyle type Abysses who waited for the signal of the flute.

It was a military power which could gain total control of the Fort City at this rate — no, even take away the Machine Dragon Hangar and the academy, and invade the Capital as it is.

"But, it's convenient now. I'll have you become our bargaining chip as a "real Princess". Isn't it nice? Lizsharte. You are a person on the side of our Empire. If you understand, then kneel on the ground and say that – – you will be our slave."

"……"

Lisha did not react to the triumphant Velvet.

She was sending her voice towards Lux.

Part 8

『… Listen, Lux Acadia. You know? I ran away. I wasn't able to die as a daughter of the proud Earl House.

A hollow voice was sent to Lux through the dragon voice.

『Knowing that I was abandoned by my father, I was told to choose either becoming an assassin of the Empire or die. I was so scared that I wasn't able to kill myself. Therefore, I once gave up on everything and decided to become a person of the Empire. From the beginning — I wasn't qualified to be a Princess.

『…Lisha, sama

『It was hard for me to behave like a Princess. But in fact, I wanted to become one, too. I, a person who betrayed the Empire once, might be saying something selfish. But you know; now I like everyone… I wished to be recognized this time for sure.

『Me too—

The voice of Lux who took a deep breath came back.

『I also have something to say. Sorry for having kept quiet about it. It's something important. I want you to hear it. So—

『Ah, sorry, it looks like I have no more time. Well then—

Lisha smiled wryly and looked up at the sky.

『Take care of yourself, Prince.

- kin*!

Immediately after, a long straight light ran straight through the atmosphere.

"Ku, ah…, y-you bastaaaaaard…!?"

The first and last weapon which Lisha threw at high speed.

It was the Sword Device of the Divine Drag-Ride < Tiamat>.

Lisha threw that lifeline which one must absolutely never let go, aiming at Velvet high up in the sky — and, although taken by surprise, it had been barely dodged.

On his cheek, a red line which was cut just now was running.

"Fufu. Aren't you a little good-looking now? You should be happy, underling; you will look good enough to be shown publicly when taking me to the Capital."

"Kuh, nuuh…!"

Holding his wound, Velvet glared at Lisha lying down face up.

"As a Princess even for an instant, I shall warn you. You should stop; someone of your caliber can't destroy this country. You're just an underling who was surely

incited by someone's sweet words and rode on them. You obtained power, you say? Don't speak gibberish. You've — changed nothing. You're just the same like in those days when you were only used by the Old Empire. ”

A momentary silence.

But meanwhile, Velvet's whole body was shivering and trembling in anger.

“—all right, Lizsharte. I changed my mind. I will tear you to pieces, throw your corpse into the royal palace and just invade it like that! Die here!”

Velvet set up the <EX Wyvern>'s cannon.

Lisha stared at it in a slightly distant look.

“Haa. It's frustrating.”

Shedding large drops of tears, she looked up at the high sky.

“Even though I was thinking that I'll behave like a Princess; without crying till the end this time even if I'm scared…”

When she muttered so, a shadow fell on Lizsharte's body.

It's over.

When she held such a conviction,

- dooh*, the bombardment was released and the atmosphere burst.

Soon after all was wrapped in huge flames—,

"What…!?"

A blue Machine Dragon — Lux's <Wyvern> was there.

He deployed the barrier at maximum output and defended against the impact with his armor.

But, the <Wyvern> which took a direct hit from the main cannon was smashed to pieces on the spot.

"Kuh…! I don't know who it is, but stop this useless struggle—"

Velvet, whose bombardment was repelled for the price of a Machine Dragon, chewed his teeth and set up his large sword.

The army of Machine Dragons which was waiting behind him set up their weapons all at once as it was the signal of attack.

“Lux…? Why—”

“…Sorry, Lisha-sama. Even though I had you repair it with much trouble.”

At the same time, standing in the way before Lisha lying down face up, Lux revealed a lonely smile.

Then, he cancelled the connection of the seriously damaged <Wyvern> and quickly put his hand on the other Sword Device remaining on his waist.

Part 9

“You know nothing about this world. You aren’t in the caliber of kings. The weakest.”

Five years ago, the last day of the coup d'état.

That night when the jet-black sky was illuminated red by the flames of war.

In the audience room of the burned-down imperial castle, his eldest brother Fugil said so.

In a calmed voice as he looked down on him.

As he scorned him.

And, as he admonished him.

"You weren't able to become completely evil after all. You said that as a Prince, you want to make the citizens happy. You want to save those who were abused and received unfair treatment—. But you know, little brother ? You had never had the qualifications to be King in the first place."

"……"

A fatigue from which he could not even groan let alone stand up.

Even so, Lux, just lying face-down as such, maintained his consciousness.

“However much resolve you hold, you believe that a “ country” or “people” are valuable things. So, you were able to spit out pipe dreams like letting them live and making places for discussions. You should be thankful to me, little brother. If I didn’t massacre the surviving army and imperial family on whom you went easy on, you would have been assassinated by those people some day. ”

It was a mockery.

—He held the resolution of destroying the Empire and killed his own heart.

Finally to Lux who wished for an ideal ending.

“As King, you tried to save not only this country’s people, but also the rotten royalty and aristocrats. You didn’t try to abandon anything. That’s why — you were outwitted without seeing through me, the ‘evil’ who tries to take away”

A cruel tone.

As he felt the cold gaze of his older brother, whom he loved and respected, on his back,

“It’s meaningless, Lux. Someone who doesn't have the resolution of incarnating ‘evil into his own will, and who isn't willing to make sacrifices, however much power he holds, it will be meaningless. That’s why you are the weakest.”

To these last words, Lux lost consciousness.

Part 10

Lux drew out his Sword Device from the black sheath and held it up to the sky.

At the same time as he pressed the button on the handle, , he muttered.

“—Manifest, Violent Dragon which devours the gods’ flesh and blood. Cut off the cloudy heavens, <Bahamut>!”

At that moment, particles of light gathered at high speed.

What appeared was black.

A lump of Mithril Dite wearing an ominous blood lust and brilliance.

From the head — which imitated a dragon's, two piercing eyes shining red peeped out.

"This is…—?"

To that uncommon power and presence, Velvet in the sky raised his voice.

"Connect On"

The Machine Dragon which appeared before Lux transformed into countless pieces of armor and wrapped his whole body.

"Don't tell me…, you are—?"

Lisha who saw this stared wide-eyed and muttered.

Soon after, in front of the 100 Machine Dragons of the Rebel army approaching before him, Lux who wore the jet-black giant dragon <Bahamut> blocked their way.

In his hand, a large sword of a black deeper than darkness was held.

“I don’t know who you are, but it doesn’t matter! I will get rid of both of you!”

In accordance with Velvet’s voice, the first three machines brandished their blades and charged.

They intended to load energy from the Force Core to them (blades) and cut down the whole barrier.

The simultaneous attack of the three machines from three directions, the right, the left and the front attacked Lux.

At that moment—,

- bakin*

“—Eh?”

The moment when the three Drag-Knight were about to swing down their swords, the Drag-Rides which the men were wearing burst into pieces.

The armor arm holding the Machine Dragon blade, the Force Core in both shoulders and the Sword Device hanging on the waist.

The three points which were vital points of attack, power, and control were pulverized in an instant.

And at the same time — the three machines which came attacking all at once at that.

"What…!?"

The eyes of the men who were defeated were not able to see anything.

What on earth happened?

At a speed which the eyes could not catch, <Bahamut> swung its blade, and the moment when the swords crossed, the fight was decided.

—Why!?

"Devour time and accelerate, <Bahamut>."

Before they could understand the situation, Lux's large sword flashed once more and knocked down the three machines before him.

"Guaaaaaaaaaah…!?"

The three <Wyvern> of the Old Empire that were already destroyed instantly lost their power and propulsion output, and fell headlong.

Although barely picked up by their friends' Machine Dragons which were on the ground, they were no longer able to fight.

"You bastaaard!"

After a pause of several seconds, five Drag-Knights of the Old Empire army once again attacked Lux simultaneously.

"< Reload on Fire >"

But, their attacks from the top, bottom, right, left and the front were fruitless and once again all the five machines were simultaneously shot down.

"Kuh…!?"

"What does that mean—!?"

"What is happening, what the hell—"

"I-Is that a Divine Drag-Ride…!? Why does it easily, like that…!"

A great number attacked all at once, and faster than anyone of them could swing his sword — or could pull the trigger of his gun, they were knocked down in an instant.

Just like a cheap-looking drama-like spectacle.

The rebel army stirred to the nightmare-like reality.

『D-Don't panic! That guy is just a Drag-Knight like us!

Velvet raised his voice and rebuked his subordinates.

『There is no way that that guy — a man has enough aptitude to use a Divine Drag-Ride for a long period of time! Besides, his movements will surely become dull soon after his attack! Aim for that chance!

“Haah!”

The Drag-Knights who received instructions from their commander surrounded Lux and attacked him once again.

Certainly, Lux loosened his movements for a few seconds as he got tired from the processing of <Bahamut >.

“Guaaaaaaaaah!”

But, the next moment when his movements became slow and it looked like he showed an opening.

He pulverized the seven Machine Dragons of the Old Empire that entered his range in an instant.

“…Impossible!”

Once again, unrest ran among the Old Empire's Drag-Knights.

"A jet-black Divine Drag-Ride… You bastard…! Don't tell me — your the one at the time of the coup d'état…!?"

When Velvet muttered, Lux looked up to the sky as if responding to it.

In the bottom of his eyes which closed just for an instant, Lux recalled the past.

『Do you want to cooperate with a wyvern along with my <Bahamut>? Or—

What Fugil asked Lux before the execution of the coup d'état.

『Are you going to use <Bahamut>—?

Part 11

"Haa… So, you've done it. Nii-san…"

On the other hand, Airi who asked Nokuto,who came back to the Fort City, went out of the rampart together

with her, and was gazing at the battlefield as she deeply sighed.

At a site separated from the rampart and about several hundreds miles away from the wasteland of the battlefield.

Airi was carried by Nokuto's <Drake> to a distance where the dragon voice barely reached the battlefield.

She had to record the information about how long Lux could use a certain Machine Dragon.

In order to closely grasp the Machine Dragon's output and operation limit, Airi asked for the unreasonable things, like wanting to go nearby, and had Nokuto take her.

"What's happening? Lux-san is… That black Divine Drag-Ride—?"

The usually composed Nokuto asked as her voice quavered.

The fact that though also correct for Divine Drag-Rides , Lux whose aptitude for the Machine Dragon should originally be inferior as he is a man, was handling more than enough.

And, the incomprehensible high-speed movement which instantly shot down the enemy army which charged.

"…Nokuto. Can you keep secret what I'm about to tell you now?"

Unlike her usual straight atmosphere, Airi whispered in a slightly casual air.

"Yes. I swear on the pride and the master of the household of attendants, the Leaflet House."

As Nokuto nodded, Airi suddenly began to talk after a deep breath.

"That is Nii-san. The strongest Drag-Knight riding the Empire's strongest Machine Dragon <Bahamut>. In the coup d'état five years ago, the one who destroyed 1200 Machine Dragons of the Empire army all by himself — the "Black Hero"."

"—!? What do you mean by that? Airi Acadia."

Nokuto opened her eyes wide and asked Airi.

"It was a Prince of the Empire — that destroyed the Old Empire? Why…?"

"…Diiiiiiiiiiiiieeeee!"

Soon after Nokuto's voice quavered.

Screams and explosions echoed again in the sky.

A jarring tone of flute could be heard immediately after.

Probably—, Velvet gave directives to the dozen of Gargoyles, which were left behind to invade the Capital, to charge.

But, even if he used the Abysses, the results would the same as a little while ago.

The sword which Lux swung at lightning speed destroyed the Gargoyles' bodies to pieces and shot them down,

In mid-air where numerous explosions occurred, the Drag-Knights of the Old Empire army charged furthermore.

"<Reload on Fire> — That is <Bahamut>'s Divine Raiment. Its ability is a 10-second magic called Compression Strengthening."

A Divine Raiment of seal and release.

Or, repression and liberation.

An ability which rapidly decreases the energy and phenomenon until a fraction of it remains in the former five seconds, and then explosively unleashes their power in the latter five seconds.

"It decelerates the flow of time in the target to some fraction in the first five seconds, and accelerates it several times in the last five seconds. Thus, the moment when the enemy showed the preliminary movement of his attack, he easily overtakes it with an accelerated slash and destroyed the enemy. It's Nii-san's technique called "quick shot"."

"Quick shot"

A special move which saw through the enemy's attack preliminary movement, used the acceleration by <Reload on Fire> and instantly destroyed the enemy's Drag-Ride.

Therefore, the moment when they brandished their swords and put a finger on the gun's trigger in Lux's range, the fight was decided.

It was the reason why he was called the strongest Drag-Knight.

"T-Then if he's so strong, why is Lux the "Weakest Undefeated"—"

"Yes, there is a reason. It's quite difficult to do the " quick shot"."

Airi muttered while watching the fight between Lux and the Old Empire army.

"In order to certainly crush the opponent's Machine Dragon, you have to perfectly strike that opening. Therefore, training was necessary in order to perfectly see through the Drag-Knight's movements and his attack preliminary movement. For example, such as keeping to

defending oneself by doing nothing, but dodging the enemy's attacks without attacking him even once in a match—"

In other words, the weakest in order to become the strongest.

The mock battle where Lux fought using the <Wyvern > was no more than training in order to use <Bahamut>'s Divine Raiment.

A technique which he acquired after about several hundred thousand battles since the Old Empire's era five years ago.

So as to move with the same sensation even with < Bahamut>, he had been adjusting by calculating the weight and air resistance and adding armor on the Wyvern.

Therefore—,

Part 12

30 machines, 40 machines, 50 machines…

At the moment when they were about to attack, the Machine Dragons of the Old Empire army were shot down.

The Old Empire's Drag-Knights army of approximately 100 machines, which existed as Velvet's unit had been reduced to less than half in no time.

"Impossible…"

Velvet, who was watching this muttered, dumbfounded.

It's strange.

No matter how much he could use a Divine Drag-Ride , if he used its special ability, the Divine Raiment, it should put a considerable burden.

There was no way that Lux, whose Machine Dragon aptitude should be lower than a woman's could continuously fight for so long.

『It's useless even if you try to gain time. Nii-san's Machine Dragon aptitude's numerical value is much higher than the basic aptitude value of us, women.

Airi's composed voice reached even Velvet through the dragon voice of Nokuto's <Drake>.

No way—

In the reality where he could only think so while doubting,

"D-Don't kid with me! Are you telling me that this bastard is that "Black Hero"!?"

Even while being flustered, Velvet furthermore issued instructions to his Drag-Knight subordinates.

But, even their movements to strike at the opening of <Bahamut>'s Divine Raiment, <Reloading on Fire> were seen through and they were crushed in no time.

"Who are you?! Why do you bastard—!"

"—Don't you remember my face, Imperial Guards Knight Squadron chief Velvet?"

"Wha…!?"

Just an instant.

To the words of Lux who turned a cold, fathomless gaze, Velvet gasped in surprise.

A brief silence was born, and at the same time, even the Empire army's Drag-Knights stopped their attacks.

"Fu, kukuku…! Hahaha!"

Seeing that, Velvet burst into laughter.

His gaze was turned to Lux's collar.

"Well well, isn't it the seventh Crown Prince? Although I did not know, please excuse my repeated rudeness."

"Please stop."

To Velvet carrying out an impolite greeting, Lux returned to his usual self and curtly replied.

"Please surrender at once. Fighting anymore than this is meaningless."

"Fu, hahaha…"

Holding his lips so as to bear it, Velvet laughed again.

"More importantly Your Highness. I would also like to say some words. For what reason—, why are you siding with the New Kingdom — the Empire's enemy?"

"……"

"Why?! Lux Acadia! Why do you, a Prince and survivor of the imperial family, turn your sword to us?!

Do you intend to become a hero by fighting for the people!? You are wrong! With such superficial feelings, be it the people or the country — you will not move anything!”

“I’m not a hero.”

Lux answered so with a dry smile.

And,

“Please listen, Lisha-sama.”

Lux looked at Lisha lying on the ground and gently called out to her.

“For this country, for the people—; I couldn’t do anything as a Prince. I lose my mother; I was afraid of losing another close person again.”

While he muttered, the memory of five years ago floated in his mind.

“I was not able to become strong for justice. I tried to save all the people, but failed. So that it doesn’t happen so this time, in order to carry out my mission, I conceal myself as the chore Prince.”

—You know nothing about the world. You aren't in the caliber of kings. The weakest.

"But — as expected, I want to help. I thought that I want you, who are suitable as the New Kingdom Princess, to recognize me. So…"

"Lux…"

Lisha's scarcely audible voice.

While hearing it, he turned his large sword towards Velvet and declared.

"I am not a hero. I'm the weakest Drag-Knight who destroyed the Empire."

Soon after Lux defiantly declared,

"…All right."

Velvet raised his sword and sent a signal to his subordinates.

"In that case, You should die! As a cornerstone of a new Empire, rot away under the justice of the Acadia Empire that I serve!"

All the dozens of Machine Dragons remaining simultaneously began an all-out attack.

“<Reload on Fire>”

In response to it, <Bahamut>’s Divine Raiment activated.

It ate time — and accelerated.

The special move — “quick shot” which saw through all the attack's preliminary movements, and pulverized the enemy in an instant.

At the same time that several Machine Dragons’ armors were smashed to pieces, Velvet attacked as he wove his way to the momentary opening.

“Lux!”

Lux heard Lisha’s scream.

The subordinates whom Velvet instigated were decoys .

And, it was just after <Bahamut>’s Divine Raiment, < Reload on Fire> already activated its effect.

Before the time accelerated once again, it must first decelerate.

Even so, if it was an ordinary opponent, it was timing which Lux could prevent with his reading (see through).

But—, the enemy was not a mere Drag-Knight.

“Apologize to His Majesty the Emperor in the other world! Traitor!”

Velvet let out a sharp, straight line slash.

A high speed flash by quick draw.

When the inescapable slash attacked Lux’s <Bahamut> —, Velvet saw it.

The cut line which he should've trace with the point of his sword running on Lux’s Machine Dragon.

And another cut line was running on his own armor arm wielding that blade.

“—Wha!?”

- crack*

"Whaaaaaa…!?"

The damage minced on his Machine Dragon was reflected in the pupils of Velvet, who opened his eyes wide in surprise.

Soon after, as if tracing the irreversible fact that "it was cut", the <EX Wyvern> broke into pieces.

The wrist armor, the Force Core and the Sword Device.

Lux's "quick shot" crushed all of them.

"W-Why…!? Your Divine Raiment… You shouldn't have been able to use it yet ! Why was my quick draw defeated—"

<Reload on Fire>.

A Special ability of compression strengthening by the Divine Raiment.

The Divine Raiment cannot be re-activated immediately after he decelerates the time in the first five seconds, and accelerates it in the last five seconds.

Even though Velvet should have cut him after seeing through it—

『You are quite a reckless person, too.

Soon after, a dragon voice through Nokuto's <Drake> — Airi's voice reached Velvet.

『Just because you can use the quick draw, there is no way you can win with the same technique against the one who invented it, right?

"Wha—!?"

To the indifferent voice, Velvet was at a loss for words.

The moment Velvet used the quick draw, the quick draw of Lux who saw through his preliminary movement overtook him with a Godspeed far exceeding it, and then did a "quick shot".

Be it the Divine Drag-Ride <Bahamut>'s performance and output.

Or the skill of Lux who became the Empire's strongest.

Or even the Divine Raiment of compression strengthening which could shot down multiple Machine Dragons in an instant.

Lux's strategy to lure Velvet by making him think "I can beat him".

(This guy, really how many trump cards does he hide––!)

In the midst, Velvet realized a certain fact.

"W-Wait! You invented it!? That can't be! You were still 12 in those days—"

"Good-bye, Velvet. Though I can't judge you as royalty anymore."

At the same time as Lux calmly muttered, the <EX Wyvern> was falling.

"I don't want to fight for the Empire as a Prince, nor for your sake. I want to fight for these girls, hoping one day to get their recognition—"

Velvet who was shot down fell to the dry earth.

All the Machine Dragons of the Old Empire's Drag-Knights were destroyed and the fight came to a close.

As Lux got down on the ground, Lisha who somehow managed to stand up stepped up while her legs were staggering.

And, she entrusted her small body to Lux wearing the Machine Dragon.

"—Thank you, Lux."

"……"

To the words of the Princess whose eyes were moist, Lux responded with a small smile.

Then suddenly, his body along with <Bahamut> slanted.

"H-Hey!? Are you all right? Lux!"

"Ahaha. It's been a long time; I got just a little tired."

He cancelled <Bahamut>'s connection and replied so.

His consciousness became gradually blurred.

While faintly hearing the shouts of joy of the “Knight Squadron” audible from far away, Lux quietly closed his eyes.

Epilogue – Where The Prince belongs

Part 1

"N, Ngh…"

With a small groan, Lux opened his eyelids.

He first saw a relatively new wooden ceiling, and the fragrance of flowers, medicinal herbs, and faint alcohol tickled his nose.

"…!? You woke up!? Thank god…! Nii-san!"

The smile of the girl who embraced him was reflected in Lux's thinly opened eyes.

"This place—?"

As he somehow spoke while blushing, Airi hurriedly parted from Lux and after clearing her throat once, she quickly made a settled expression and straightened up her back.

"Um — so, you finally woke up, Nii-san?"

"Airi? Ugh…!"

Trying to get to his little sister's voice, Lux knitted his brows at the dull pain running throughout his body.

Airi dressed in her uniform who saw that, sighed once on the chair in front of the bed.

"You reap what you sow. After continuously using <Bahamut>'s Divine Raiment that much, it's obvious, right? It's better than you sleeping for one week as in the old days though."

"…Perhaps, are you angry?"

As Lux laughed so awkwardly,

"Don't you understand if I don't say anything?"

She returned a grin.

<Bahamut>'s Divine Raiment required a very intense consumption from the user.

Even for Lux, who had a Machine Dragon aptitude which far exceeded an ordinary woman's while being a man, it was a considerable burden.

Because of that, Lux who had almost died before made a promise to Airi not to use it directly until <Bahamut>'s operation time limit including the Divine Raiment was accurately clarified.

It was also the reason why Airi, as a student of civil official aspiration, was deciphering ancient documents of ruins involved with Machine Dragons

And if by any chance, Lux's talent and the fact that he was the "Black Hero" were known, Airi feared that he would be regarded as dangerous by various organizations including inside and outside the country, and would be targeted.

That's why she had tried to stop him.

Until Lux defeated "a certain man" whom he was chasing, in another sense, she had tried to stop his habit of exposing himself to danger—

He knew that Airi was worried about him.

So, when he tried to apologize,

"Nii-san is—, a big idiot."

Airi said so and embraced Lux, burying her face in his chest.

"…Five years ago. When Nii-san fell and did not wake up, do you know how much I was worried every day…?"

Airi who had a usually settled attitude said as her voice got cloudy.

"Certainly, I'm a big idiot", Lux smiled wryly.

"I'm sorry for making you worried, Airi."

After patting his little sister's head for a while until she settled down,

"Speaking of which…, is everyone safe?"

"……"

The moment when she heard Lux's words, Airi parted from Lux and turned scornful eyes towards him as she was amazed.

She seemed to be somehow dissatisfied.

"Ask that to them. I'm leaving already. Well then Nii-san, take care of yourself."

"Yes, later then."

Airi stood up and quietly left the medical office.

She passed by three girls who entered the room.

"Hi, it's good to see that you look fine, Lux-kun."

"Oh! I'm glad you woke up! How is it, Lux-cchi? Do you remember me?"

"Yes. It seems that it's just fatigue, so I think it's all right."

They were Sharis, Tillfarr, and Nokuto of the Triad.

Each of them held fruits, flowers, and a silver work of charm, putting them on Lux's bedside.

"…Thank you"

To the fact that there were people who would do that much for him, he was unintentionally moved to tears.

"Fufu. You seemed to be so moved that you don't know what to say. But, you shouldn't mind it, Lux-kun."

"That's right. You know, Lux-cchi. When a young lady gives you a present, the way to return it is with a bigger one. Let's say that it's courtesy in the current New Kingdom."

"Yes. All of us expected it, so."

"….Ah, what to say, I will do my best."

To the three girls' smiles, Lux returned a complex smile.

"It will be bad to stay too long in a place of convalescence. We will excuse ourselves to leave early."

(In that case, I also wanted you not to put the pressure of presents on me…)

As he swallowed such words and saw off the Triad, two girls entered next.

"You seem to be more all right then I thought."

"Good morning, Lu-chan."

A slender girl with a cool impression, and a big girl of chest gaving a fluffy feeling.

Krulcifer Einvolk and Philphie Aingram.

“Well, there are a lot of things which I want to thoroughly talk with you about, but—”

Krulcifer cast down her eyes and showed a thoughtful face for a short while.

Realizing that it was about the “Black Hero”, Lux was startled.

“Still, you’ve quite a disadvantageous character.”

Krulcifer said in a teasing tone.

“If you didn’t request my cooperation, I wouldn’t have known your secret. Why?”

He asked Krulcifer to protect Lisha and the “Knight Squadron”.

In order to stop the enemy’s attack in case he tried to aim not at Lux, but at Lisha and the “Knight Squadron” in the rear.

This time, Lux ended up defeating all the enemies as a result, but it seemed that Krulcifer had cleaned up afterwards in various ways, such as capturing those rebels whose Machine Dragons were destroyed after all was settled, and handing them over to the guards of the Fort City.

"It's because I thought that it was the only way."

Lux honestly answered back.

He would have done everything he could to save Lisha.

Therefore, so that he could fight without constraint, the cooperation of a talented person was indispensable.

"That's all good, but you should be careful. For some reason, you seem to be full of openings even though you are that strong."

"Eh—?"

Lux was shaken by Krulcifer's mischievous voice.

"I am not a cruel woman so as to continue this in front of a convalescent person. We will talk slowly and carefully sometime soon again."

"Ah, um, gently…"

As Lux somehow managed to return only that to Krulcifer whose smile contained an implication,

"…Philphie?"

"……"

Philphie silently approached Lux and clang her front on his.

"Uwah!?"

Approaching her lovely face at a distance enough to be able to kiss, Lux confusedly bent backward.

Even so, Philphie showed no signs of minding it in particular.

"Yes. You don't have fever, so it's all right, I guess."

She muttered so as she nibbled a doughnut at hand.

"Welcome back, Lu-chan."

Philphie who seemed to be emotionless at first glance revealed a small smile.

"…Ah, yes. I'm back, Phi-chan."

As Lux who has become slightly embarrassed blushed, Philphie suddenly left his side and went out.

"Well then, see you later."

"Eh? Yes…"

"You've quite a pretty childhood friend."

"P-Please, don't tease me!"

Krulcifer also chuckled and left the medical home.

As Lux whose heart was still beating fast got up, several more classmates and "Knight Squadron" members visited the medical home.

"Ah, so you were safe! You've a strong bad luck, eh."

"It seems that you've protected Lizsharte-sama. You've my thanks."

"Next time, you should learn how to attack. Though you won't be as good as that, legendary — "Black Hero"."

Hearing the talk of several female students, Lux guessed that his identity was not exposed.

Lisha of course, but also Krulcifer and Nokuto seemed to exercise tact.

"…Phew"

After all the visitors left, the woman who was the doctor of the medical office came by at last.

After asking first several questions to the awakened Lux, then taking a light examination,

"I have a message from Principal Relie. She wants you to come to the principal room after you settle down. That there's something important concerning your treatment–_"

"…Understood."

Lux sighed once after leaving the medical room.

As expected, the important matter should have already been known by Principal Relie, too.

Now that the "Black Hero"'s identity, though to only several people, was exposed, Lux could not remain here.

Originally, the story that a person of the Empire took part in the coup d'état must not come to light.

If a member of the Old Empire's imperial family destroyed the Empire, it would be recognized by the citizens and feudal lords that it was not a revolution, but a fight for hegemony in the Empire or just an act, and the unifying force of the new Kingdom would weaken.

Therefore, even if the rumor that the "Black Hero" was there arose, it would be bad that Lux, the Prince who was that proof remained.

"Besides, it was a temporary enrolment to begin with …"

It was surely about that kind of talk.

(…It's finally a good bye, I guess.)

With a slightly deep emotion in his chest, Lux decided to head to a certain place.

Part 2

The Drag-Ride's workshop smelled of metal and oil as usual.

Thinking about it, even though I came to the academy to do the work of a Dragon machine mechanic apprentice , I didn't do anything in the end, thought Lux with a wry smile.

<Bahamut>'s storage location was not in the hangar of ordinary Machine Dragons.

It was quietly sleeping in a secret place called the top-secret hangar N° 0 which was in the basement of the Capital.

The Coup d'état's last day five years ago.

After having lost consciousness in the audience room, Lux was picked up by Lisha's aunt who became the later New Kingdom's Queen.

When he woke up, Fugil had suddenly disappeared, and his whereabouts were unknown.

Probably because of the collapse of the imperial castle, not only <Bahamut> was not taken to Lux, but he also miraculously regained consciousness.

The revolution succeeded, but Lux regarded Fugil, who intentionally led the Empire to collapse, as dangerous and afterwards he decided to chase him.

As the chore Prince of the New Kingdom.

And, in order to stack training so as to be able to freely use <Bahamut> whose burden was too big while wandering—

There was the danger of being assassinated as a Prince of the Old Empire, so he could not stay at the same place.

"But, I feel like I've been here for a quite long time …"

He was happy for attending the Drag-Knight's academy, and for also being able to meet friends of the same age for the first time —or at least people whom he could called so.

It was a little regrettable that she did not come for a visit, but he wanted to greet the person to whom he was the most indebted to last, and thus came here.

"Hey! Isn't it Lux?! Is it your injury already all right?"

As he was thinking about such a thing, a girl who was sitting before the work unit for Drag-Rides looked back at Lux with a smile.

A slightly dirty white gown put on top of her uniform.

Lisha's figure which did not seem Princess-like as usual was there.

It looked like she was still working hard in the research of the strongest Drag-Knight in this workshop.

Until very recently, I was thinking that she was acting like a Princess, but now — I felt very relieved.

Lux also thought that it was sad after all that he could not see her anymore.

"Lizsharte-sama. Thank you for what you've done until now."

"Fufu. I'm moving for myself. So, there is no reason for you to thank me. More importantly, I want you to test something next time. I found an interesting equipment."

"Then, give me a request again then. I will come soon at anytime."

However — I must already leave the academy though.

Thinking so, Lux was about to leave the workshop, but he suddenly remembered his purpose.

"Ah, speaking of which, it's about my <Wyvern>, but–_"

It should have been greatly damaged by that fight, but he wondered how he would take it back.

Since Lux had only <Bahamut>'s Sword Device at hand, the other one should probably be under repair, but —

"Ah, before that, look at this. Because you're a special person, you mustn't show it to other students, but — you 're the owner."

"Eh…?"

Suddenly, Lisha opened the garage storing Machine Dragons in the back of the room.

There—, there was a huge jet-black Machine Dragon.

It was Lux's Divine Drag-Ride <Bahamut>.

"Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeh!? —Why!?"

He unintentionally cried out.

"Now, I am repairing the very old scratches. Divine Drag-Ride repair is difficult, but I can't let anyone help me for only this much, either. After all—, it's an

important secret in which only a restricted number of people know that this machine will be put in the academy."

"I'll go see the Principal a little!"

When Lisha was going to talk again, Lux had already started running.

Part 3

Running up by skipping 2 steps once while running up the stairs of the school building, he headed to the principal room.

"What is the meaning of this, Relie-san!?"

- paff*

When he pushed the large door open with both his hands,

"Congratulations on your official admission! Lux-kun!"

With small cheers, thunderous applause arose.

In the wide principal room, other than Relie Aingram, girls whom Lux was familiar with.

Krulcifer, Philphie, Airi, and other classmates had gathered.

“Eh…?”

Lux who thought that there would surely be only the Principal, stiffened as he was taken by surprise.

And, a last person, a girl in uniform entered.

“Lizsharte, sama?”

“Ahem. Well then, instead of the Principal, allow me to carry out the greeting. Chore Prince Lux Acadia. I, the New Kingdom Princess, shall grant life to you, a criminal .”

Lisha changed her way of speaking, said so and walked before Lux.

One Sword Device stored in a brand-new sheath in her hand.

"Thanks to your cooperation — I was saved. You were able to protect not only this Fort City, but also our country. I admit that there is clear power and justice in yourself and extol you."

Declaring so, Lisha softly smiled.

"Therefore, here is an order from me. You stay here. As our chore Prince, as the first male student, become our power. We shall admit you who should not originally be allowed here. There is no objection, Hero."

"Errr…"

A silence as if time stopped.

When Lux raised his face as he was embarrassed, Principal Relie smiled wryly.

"If you're like that, then you'll have trouble handling girls from now on, Lux-kun."

She just said that.

So, this is what she meant by "there's something important concerning your treatment".

"Therefore, how to put it. The sword of the <Wyvern> is still in the middle of repair, but—, Will you receive it? My sword."

While her cheeks were dyed red and she slightly averted her eyes, Lisha held out the sword.

The moment he saw it, Lux suddenly leaked a breath and kneeled down.

"As you command, my Princess"

Immediately after Lux received the sword, cheers arose from the surroundings.

Hung by Lisha's smile, Lux also smiled wryly.

Thus, Lux Acadia got a place where he belonged for the first time in the New Kingdom.

As the Prince of girls whom he should protect.

References

1. ↑ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dogeza
2. ↑ says often when one makes a test of sound of a mike
3. ↑ 何!? Please also TLC this sentence
4. ↑ 目, TLC here again, please
5. ↑ "accomplished fact"; something that has already happened and is thus unlikely to be reversed, a done deal. In French used only in the expression placer/mettre quelqu'un devant le fait accompli meaning to present somebody with a fait accompli
6. ↑ it's the same Capital as the royal Capital, except since there are the rebel troops of the Old Empire, he doesn't call it "Royal" Capital, but "Imperial" Capital